

I Love Anthropologie! Applying Uses and Gratifications Theory to Corporate Social Media and Personal Style Blogs

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About the Author

Jessica Sellers is a marketing communications professional interested in how people make decisions, effective communication, digital communication channels, fashion and style. In this study, she combined her interests to focus on why people use and author digital communication channels to make decisions about shopping choices.

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Abstract

Social media and blogs are becoming an increasingly common way consumers research brands and products before making a purchase. This is true for small and large purchases. Using the theory of uses and gratification, the research sought to discover why fashion consumers visit and follow a brand's pages on social media such as Facebook and Twitter, read blogs written primarily about a brand, and write blogs about a brand.

An online survey collected Anthropologie fans' attitudes about brand social media and their uses and gratifications for consuming that social media. A focus group collected blog readers' uses and gratifications for reading personal style blogs and consuming a brand's social media, and phone and emailed interviews collected open-ended responses from personal style bloggers about their uses and gratifications for writing and reading brand-focused blogs and social media.

Results indicate that the different forms of media are consumed for different reasons—social media is seen as a convenient way to learn about sales and get shopping discount codes, while blogs are better for clothing styling inspiration and entertainment.

Introduction

Millions of people use social media everyday, and many choose to follow their favorite brands on these social sites. Additionally, many people read blogs focused around hobbies and interests, such as fashion and style. To reach these users, companies are creating brand profiles and reaching out to blog authors (bloggers) to communicate with their customers and supporters on social media and blogs. But in order to be effective, brands need to determine what sort of information customers want to find and sometimes are actively looking for when consuming these media.

This study focused on the retailer Anthropologie, owned by Urban Outfitters Inc. Anthropologie is described on its corporate website as “a lifestyle brand that imparts a sense of beauty, optimism and discovery to our customer. For her, Anthropologie is an escape from the everyday; it is a source of inspiration and delight, where innovative merchandising, customer centricity and a curated array of products come together to create an unimagined experience. Anthropologie products are an expression of our customer’s appreciation for artfulness and good design.” (Urban Outfitters Inc. website).

Headquartered in Philadelphia, Penn., Urban Outfitters Inc. has several brands, (Anthropologie, Urban Outfitters, BHLDN, and Terrain) which together brought in nearly \$2.3 billion in sales in 2011. Of this, Anthropologie made an estimated \$144 million in sales or 6.3 percent of all Urban Outfitters brands. (Dun & Bradstreet).

Anthropologie has a robust social media program, both organization-run and independent fan-run. Anthropologie maintains a Facebook page and Twitter and Pinterest accounts. It encourages website visitors to save its products to Pinterest via a “Pin it!” button feature on product pages, and also enables customer comments/reviews on its product pages. Fans write independent Anthro-centric personal style weblogs (blogs) where they discuss the clothing and company, review items

for fit, display their outfits and even sell their used Anthropologie clothing. This study explored why fans of Anthropologies would read Anthropologie-run social media posts and fan-run personal style blogs, as well as write personal style blogs. For the duration of this paper, references to “blogs” refer to personal style blogs.

Literature Review

Introduction to Social Media

Social media, which today is primarily thought of as Facebook and Twitter, but includes a myriad of other websites, grew out of online forums and chat groups, and later formed as the now-defunct Friendster, MySpace and other sites. The foundation of social media is that users create profiles and then connect to others and have conversations, usually conveyed as text either in symmetrical formats such as live chats or asymmetrically through posts that can be viewed by everyone, the user’s contacts, or specific individuals at their convenience.

The audience for consuming brand information on social media and personal blogs is profiled in Nielsen’s State of the Media: The Social Media Report, which found that:

- Nearly 80 percent of active U.S. Internet users visit social networks and blogs. This accounts for nearly 23 percent of total time spent online.
- Facebook accounts for more time spent online by Americans than another other U.S. website.
- 70 percent of active online adult social networkers shop online.
- 60 percent of people who use three or more digital means of research for product purchases learned about a specific brand or retailer from a social networking site.
 - o 48 percent of these consumers have responded to a retailer’s offer posted on Facebook or Twitter.

- The most active social networkers are females, aged 18-34, have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. She is also two percent more likely than average to earn under \$50,000 and live in New England.
- In May 2011, U.S. Internet users spent 54.46 billion minutes on Facebook. They spent 1.35 billion minutes on Blogger and Tumblr sites combined. (Nielsen, 2011, 1-4)

Introduction to Blogs

Blogs, a contraction of the words “web” and “log,” are websites where individuals publish content about any topic they wish. These posts can feature photos, videos or music as desired by the author, and appear with the most recent post first, usually archiving all previous post for any interested readers to browse. While many corporations and companies maintain brand-centric blogs, only personal blogs run by individuals not affiliated with a corporation are included in this study.

There are a number of different platforms that host blogs, but in the U.S., Blogger, Wordpress, LiveJournal and Tumblr are among the most common for personal blogs. Blogs have grown rapidly in popularity over the past 20 years, and are thought to have emerged in the mid-1990s. Rocamora (2011) gives a brief history: “In 1999, there were about fifty blogs, but by 2005 the number reached eight million. At the time ‘about 27 percent (32 million) of all Internet users accessed blogs and 12 percent had posted comments or links on these sites.’ (Kaye, 2007,128). In 2008, the blogosphere—the Internet space comprising of all blogs—counted 184 million blogs and 346 million readers (Technorati, 2008).” (Rocamora, 2011, 408). The total number of blogs in existence is difficult to track because at any time bloggers abandon their blogs and new ones can form. In October 2011, 173 million bloggers were identified on platforms such as Livejournal, Wordpress or Blogger. (Statista, 2012), a statistic that omitted to count the rising blog platform Tumblr.

Personal style blogs have emerged as a popular fashion style resource for many women who enjoy fashion and clothing. Personal style blogs can be categorized within the genre of personal journal blogs, “in which authors report on their lives and inner thoughts and feelings.” (Herring, 2004, 6). In personal journal blogs, “posts usually focus on bloggers’ interests or hobbies, their family and friends, their own creative work and personal experience.” (Li, 2007, 8). Technorati’s 2011 State of the Blogosphere report, which surveyed bloggers of all types of blogs and topics, found that about 36 percent of hobbyist bloggers say they blog about brands they love or hate, 28 percent post product or brand reviews, 26 percent blog about their customer experiences, and eight percent blog about company information or gossip. (Technorati State of the Blogosphere, Part 1, Page 2)

Uses and Gratifications Theory

To better understand why Anthropologie customers would choose to interact with the brand via social media sites Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram and with other Anthropologie customers via personal style blogs, the social science theory Uses and Gratifications was explored.

Uses and gratifications theory developed as researchers sought to understand what gratifications attract an audience to different types of media, keep them using it, and what types of content satisfies their social and psychological needs. (Ruggiero, 2000). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch’s 1973 paper laid out a foundation for uses and gratifications theory. Several aspects of the theory are key:

1. The audience actively chooses to consume the media.
2. The audience member takes the initiative choosing media to gratify his or her need.
3. The media in question competes with other sources of need satisfaction. In the case of brand pages on social media, the brand’s own website, competitor’s social media, and any other form of activity that could fill the user’s need competes with the brand’s social media page.

4. People are “sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least recognize them when confronted with them.” (Katz et al., 510-511).

Social Media

Ruggiero (2000) discussed the interactive nature of online media, which allows visitors to be active users, a key requirement for the uses and gratifications theory. Individuals display different levels and types of activity in different settings and stages in a communication process so it is not possible to generalize activity level broadly. Ruggiero observed that when media use becomes ritualized or habitual, it is frequently serving a utilitarian function to some degree for that individual. Examples of utilitarian functions include entertainment or information gathering.

While individuals have always been able to choose what media they wish to use to fulfill their diverse needs, the Internet and social media offer a deeper level of interactivity compared to traditional media such as broadcast television, radio or print publications. “Interactive media obscure the line between the sender and receiver of mediated messages,” Ruggiero (2000, 15) says. Social media allows individuals to directly interact through posts, comments, “likes,” retweets, and using the content of the posts in their own way (recreating it to better fit their needs, creating “answer” posts such as response videos on YouTube, etc.) Understanding individuals’ motivation to use the media and satisfaction with the media are critical for brands interested in influencing users.

Ruggiero (2000) compiles user-oriented dimensions of interactivity from many research sources that can explain some of the needs users are looking to fill or solve: Threats, benefits, sociability, isolation, involvement and inconvenience, as well as Ha & James’ (1998) dimensions of gratifications: Playfulness, choice, connectedness, information collection, and reciprocal

communication. These dimensions can help us categorize what sort of needs users are filling by visiting Anthropologie social media.

Park et al. (2009) identified four primary uses and gratifications users gain from participating in Facebook groups: Socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking and information. While this study focused on political or civic Facebook groups, the information helps us anticipate the types of interaction or information users expect or want from accessing brand information via Facebook as a channel.

Park (2011) explores the specific gratifications (benefits) that users may be seeking when they consume social media. She obtained her information using an online survey and observational data collected of community behavior, textual analysis of members' communication and participation in the community. Experiential benefits are social and hedonic benefits, such as the desire to find people who like the same brand and to be entertained, respectively. Functional benefits are informational and economic benefits, such as product search or brand news, and promotional/sales information, respectively.

Park found that experiential benefits do positively influence brand social network relationship quality but functional benefits do not. Park quotes Chaney (2010), saying, "The positive impact of experiential benefits on brand social network relationship quality confirms the idea that brand social network is a conversational environment that needs to be social, interactive, and entertaining, not a commerce/shopping environment." (Park, 2011, 156). In other words, social media is about creating conversations and relationships between brands and their customers.

Experiential features positively influence brand relationship quality: "Strategies such as posting messages to engage with members, informing and educating, pacing postings, and providing

entertaining content must be implemented in a way that improves consumers' overall shopping experience and brand engagement. Economic factors may not be a strong factor in creating that brand-customer relationship. Simply creating a brand space for customers is seen as the brand making an effort to build a relationship with its customers. Just as personal relationships are built, the brand-customer relationship is built by having personal interactions." (Park, 2011, 156) In fact, Park observed that users seemed to become used to receiving certain types of economic benefits, and expressed their disappointment in smaller offers such as a 15 percent off discount code versus a higher discount. This further demonstrates that using economic rewards as a primary benefit of participating in a brand's social network may not contribute to creating a positive emotional connection between the brand and its customers. She suggested instead that marketers "identify unmet needs and opportunities for specific products, accelerate new product and service development, and utilize a brand social network as a venue to test a market for new products." (Park, 2011, 158).

Personal Style Blogs

On July 3, 2012, Technorati.com listed 1,304,902 blogs in its directory, of which 10,227 were categorized as fashion blogs. On the same day, Tumblr posted that it is the hosting service for 62.6 million blogs, and WordPress listed that it hosts 75,109,612 sites. Both of these hosting companies, along with Blogger, which does not share how many blogs it hosts publically, are the most commonly used by personal style bloggers.

Rocamora (2011) asserts that the first fashion blog was www.nogoodforme.com, launched in 2003. Some fashion blogs celebrate street style by posting photos taken on the street of (often) strangers to the blog author. Personal style blogs, also known as personal fashion blogs, are independent, that is, not serving as the voice of any corporation or brand. (Rocamora, 2011, 409). Personal style blogs differ from other personal journal blogs in that they are characterized as being focused mainly on

style, the likes and dislikes of the writer, and often feature “outfit of the day” photos of the writer and a description of her clothing. Even more specifically, some personal style blogs focus nearly exclusively on one or a few brands most liked by the blog writer. Some join blogging communities such as Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB), a free membership organization that offers advice to fashion and style bloggers. Less commonly, the personal style blog is maintained as a business by the blogger, who has received enough recognition that she partners with various brands to promote products through sponsored posts. In these situations, the blogger usually identifies the brands that are sponsoring her blog by giving them ad space and mentioning it in her posts. If a brand provides money or gifts to the blogger, she is required to disclose this information by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), as outlined in the FTC’s *Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising*. Bloggers usually indicate sponsorship with a disclaimer at the end of the post, and individual gifted items with a “c/o brand name” when listing outfit components (clothing and accessory items).

Kaye (2010) studied news-related blogs, and found that users visit blogs “for links to information sources, for information I can’t get from traditional media, because blogs are interesting, to access information at any time and because blogs are independent of traditional media.” (Kaye, 2010, 199). Kaye’s study seems to have primarily been focused around news and political blogs, including Daily Kos, Newsbusters, Slate, CNN and Citizen Journalism. Perhaps due to this political slant of the survey source, antitraditional media sentiment emerged as the second strongest motivator to visit blogs, but this may also apply to brand-based blogs because users may believe that corporate-run blogs are unlikely to disclose flaws on items it is promoting. Blog users “rely on blogs as a way to check on the accuracy and bias of traditional media accounts.” (Kaye, 2010, 201). Reading blog posts in order to form opinions is one important motivator for visiting blogs. Blog readers use blogs as a way to find “support and validation of their own opinions and to help them make up their minds about important issues...find out about issues that affect them, keep up with social trends,

develop critical thinking skills, and evaluate their stances on various issues.” (Kaye, 2010, 201).

When it comes to shopping and forming opinions about specific products, reviews on blogs can be helpful. Chiang, et al. (2011) found that interactivity on a blog and information demand are correlated, “which implies that, faced with many products to choose from, consumers want to take into consideration the experience of others.” (Chiang, 2011, 1249).

Blog ambiance also matters to users: “Users enjoy affiliating with a specific blogger, reading personal accounts of events and following his or her interactions with others. They are drawn to the good writing and find blogs humorous and interesting.” (Kaye, 2010, 201).

Interacting with bloggers does not seem to be a strong motivator in reading blogs. Blog authors have ultimate control over whether a comment appears on the blog or not, and allows for asymmetrical two-way communication through the comment section. (Herring, 2004, 10). Kaye (2010) found that six of 10 users “rarely/never participate on blogs.” (Kaye, 2010, 206). Still, reading blogs can give the reader a sense of knowing the author. “Following a personal fashion blog means not only discovering the sartorial style of its author, but also regularly finding out a bit more information about her life, the moments and events that punctuate it. As one navigates through personal fashion blogs and their many entries, a portrait of their authors emerges, creating a feeling of intimacy.” (Rocamora, 2011, 412).

Blog readers can interact with bloggers and their posts by commenting on the post itself, and by writing a related post on their own blog and linking back to it. A study (Trammell, 2005) that analyzed comments left on celebrity blogs found that 51.7 percent of comments responded to the blog post topic. Others, 39.9 percent, ignored the post topic and instead commented on an earlier comment left by another reader. (Trammell, 2005, 13). This may imply that readers enjoy interacting with others as a way of creating a community.

Bloggers have their own uses and gratifications for blogging. Li (2007) found six main blogging motivations, in order of importance: Improving writing, sharing information, medium appeal (overall enjoyment of the blog format), self-expression, self-documentation, and socialization. (Li, 2007, 11).

Writing each post gives the blogger an opportunity to contemplate what they wish to say. Writing is a skill that must be exercised intentionally to improve. In this sense, a personal style blog most resembles online journals.

Self-expression is a broad category. Blogging allows the blogger to express herself through her written messages, photos of herself and the overall layout design, and her clothing and accessories that she chooses to wear, as well as any other glimpses into her life she offers to her readers. Bloggers cite many different motivations in starting a personal style blog, but some do address identity construction, saying that they wanted to figure out how to dress in ways that more authentically represented who they feel they are.



Figure 1 Keiko Lynn, Jan. 20, 2013

“Personal fashion blogs document this process of identity construction through clothes.”
(Rocamora, 2011, 410).

Socialization is primarily accomplished through interaction between the blogger and her readers. “The interactivity between bloggers and readers as well as the interconnectivity among blogs pave the way for building topic-based or blog-centered community. Bloggers expect to meet readers who can share interests in common or exchange opinions towards certain issues.” (Li, 2007, 22). The blog can also serve as an avenue of reassurance and support for the blogger. In the comments section, readers predominantly leave positive messages for the blogger. The blogger does have the power to choose what comments are published, so it is possible that negative comments are deleted, “but the praises that celebrate the beauty or style of a blogger abound.” (Rocamora, 2011, 416).

Research Questions

1. What needs and gratifications are Anthropologie customers seeking when they choose to engage in brand-created social media?
2. Are experiential benefits or functional benefits stronger motivators for Anthropologie customers to engage with Anthropologie’s brand-created social media?
3. How does interaction with Anthropologie’s brand-created social media influence purchasing behaviors?
4. What uses and gratifications are Anthropologie customers seeking when reading personal style blogs?
5. How does reading personal style blogs affect purchasing behaviors?
6. What uses and gratifications are Anthropologie customers seeking when writing personal style blogs?
7. How does writing personal style blogs affect purchasing behaviors?

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Customers who are heavily engaged with a brand are more likely to consume the brand's company-sponsored social media.
- Hypothesis 2: Customers who engage heavily in consuming a brand's company-sponsored social media are more likely to purchase after being prompted by a social media post.
- Hypothesis 3: Customers who read personal style blogs focusing on a brand are more likely to be frequent purchasers of that brand.
- Hypothesis 4: Writing personal style blogs increases clothing purchases.

Research Methods

Background information was collected from Urban Outfitters Inc. website, their Financial Year 2011 10-K, their Financial Year 2012 10-K, and both the Urban Outfitters Inc. and Anthropologie profiles on the database Dun & Bradstreet.

Primary data was collected through a snowball convenience sample survey, a focus group of four blog readers and 11 interviews with personal style blog writers.

Snowball Convenience Sample Survey

The survey was posted to the author's Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn profiles on multiple days, posted by the author to Anthropologie's Facebook and Twitter pages, by friends of the author to their Facebook pages, by blogger Lisa of Respect the Shoes to her blog Facebook and Google+ pages, and by blogger Elizabeth to her blog Behind the Closet Door. Both of these blogs are primarily focused on Anthropologie products and comment on clothing, sales, do product reviews,

post their outfits, and provide a forum through the comment sections for other Anthropologie enthusiasts to interact. By far, it is believed that most respondents found the survey through the blog Behind the Closet Door, as observed by the sudden volume of survey responses that occurred after her blog post. In total, the survey was open from April 22, 2012 to May 1, 2012 and received 126 responses. All respondents were female, and none received any compensation for participating in the survey.

Focus Group

Four women who read personal style blogs participated in a focus group to discuss their uses and gratifications for reading personal style blogs, following brands on social media, and their clothing shopping habits. Ages ranged from 27-30.

Interviews

Eleven interviews with writers of personal style blogs (referred to as bloggers) were interviewed over the phone and through email about their uses and gratifications of reading and writing personal style blogs. All are women between the ages 23-36.

Results

Review of Anthropologie corporate reports shows that using social media to reach customers is a successful strategy for Anthropologie. Quote from the FY2012 Annual Report: “We believe that our web marketing and social media initiatives are a significant contributor to our Direct-to-Consumer sales growth. For fiscal 2013 we plan to increase our investment in web marketing and social media initiatives for all our brands. These increases will be based on our continual evaluation of the customer’s response rate to web marketing initiatives.” The direct-to-customer segment is

comprised of catalog and website sales, which are directly supported by social media posts and emails to customers. In 2011, Urban Outfitters recorded \$110 million in direct-to-customer net sales, a 34 percent increase over 2010 company-wide. Urban Outfitters attributes this to increased traffic to its websites and an increased average order value. In the Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Report, Urban Outfitters reported an overall increase of 1.3 percent for direct-to-customer net sales compared to fiscal year 2011.

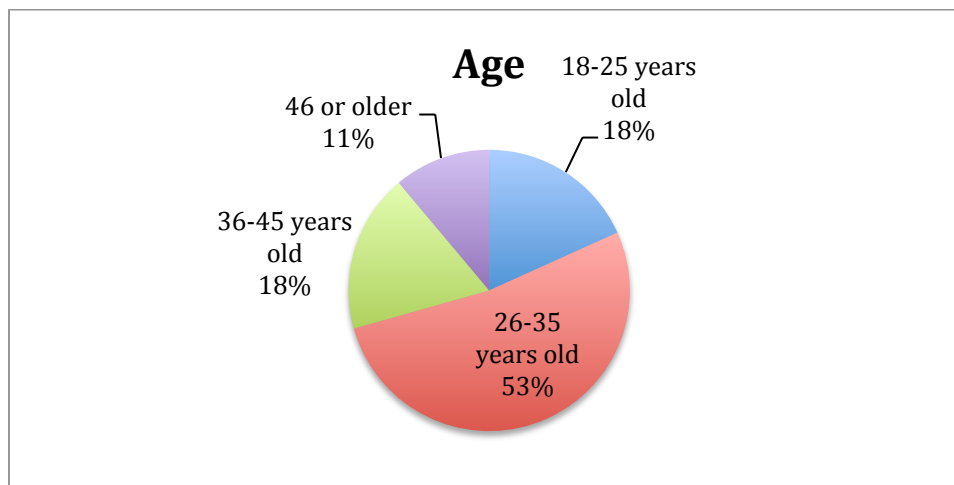
Urban Outfitters describes their in-store customer relationship strategy as being: “Our core strategy is to provide unified store environments that establish emotional bonds with the customer.” (Urban Outfitters, FY2012 Annual Report). Later in the annual report, under the heading “Marketing and Promotion,” Urban Outfitters shared that they believe that “by starting a conversation and interacting directly with our customers, most notably via Facebook and Twitter, we are more effective at understanding and serving their fashion needs.” When discussing challenges and competition, social media is cited as “a way to interact with our customers and enhance their shopping experiences.” (Urban Outfitters, FY2012 Annual Report).

When describing their target customer, CEO Glen Senk said, “The core Anthropologie customer is 28 to 45 years old, upper middle class, either married or in a committed relationship. Roughly 50 percent of them have kids. The vast majority of these women are college-educated. The last time I looked, I think 60 percent of them travel overseas on holiday once a year. This is a customer who is well read. We say that this is the customer you want to have at the dinner table. She's an optimist. She's aware of what's going on in the world, but she chooses to focus on the positive, not the negative. She wants to look beautiful.” (Senk, Urban Outfitters Q3 2012 Earnings Call).

Social Media Survey Results

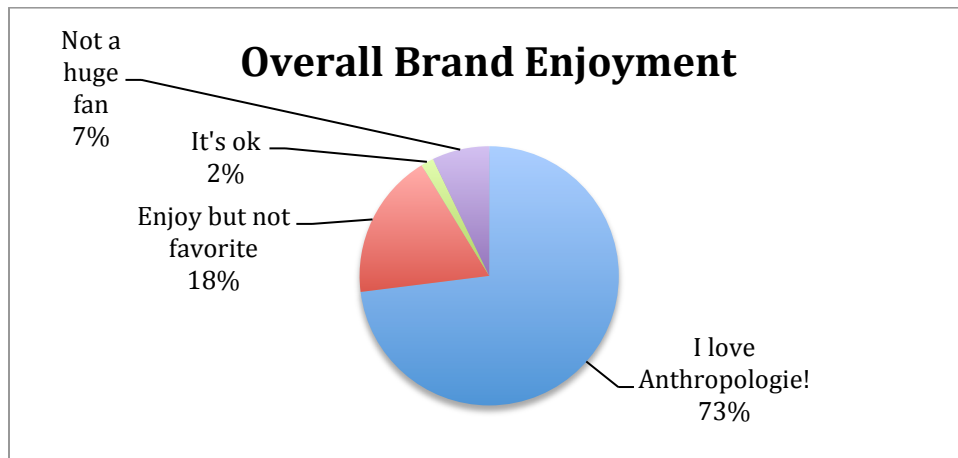
Survey questions were written to determine if the respondent is a user of Anthropologie's Facebook and Twitter communication, how long they had subscribed to Anthropologie social media, how engaged they were in using it, what gratifications they sought, and if it had ever inspired them to take action to purchase an Anthropologie product. While many Anthropologie customers choose to "follow" the brand on Twitter or "like" the brand on Facebook, it is not necessary to do these things to access the Anthropologie pages on these websites. In addition, on Facebook and Twitter, posts from brands that a user has "liked" or "followed" will show up in the user's newsfeed (their default homepage), so they are able to view and read posts without having to click through to visit the brand's actual webpage on the websites.

Demographic Information



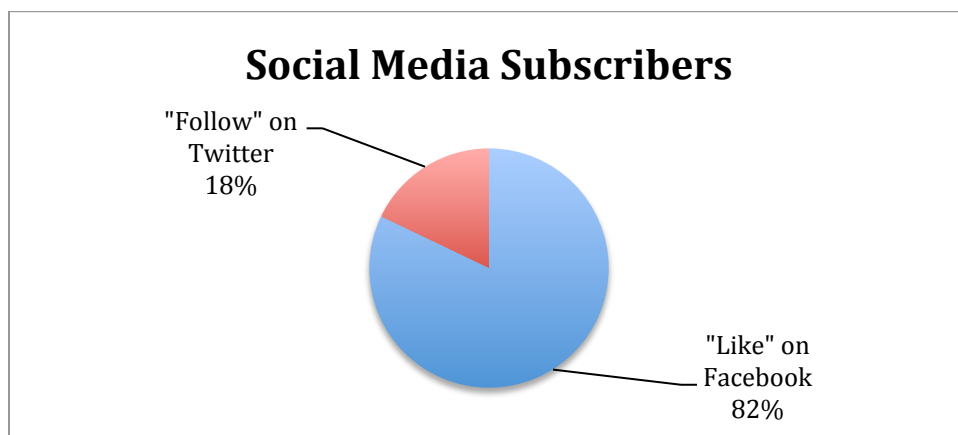
The majority of respondents were ages 26-35 at 53 percent (66). Eighteen percent (23) were ages 36-45, 18 percent (23) were ages 18-25, and 11 percent (14) were age 46 or older. All but one survey respondent was female, and the lone male respondent indicated that he had no interest in Anthropologie and did not follow any Anthropologie social media or purchase Anthropologie products. The largest two segments, 26-35 years old and 36-45 years old, fall into Anthropologie's core customer profile, as described by Glen Senk above.

Overall Brand Enjoyment

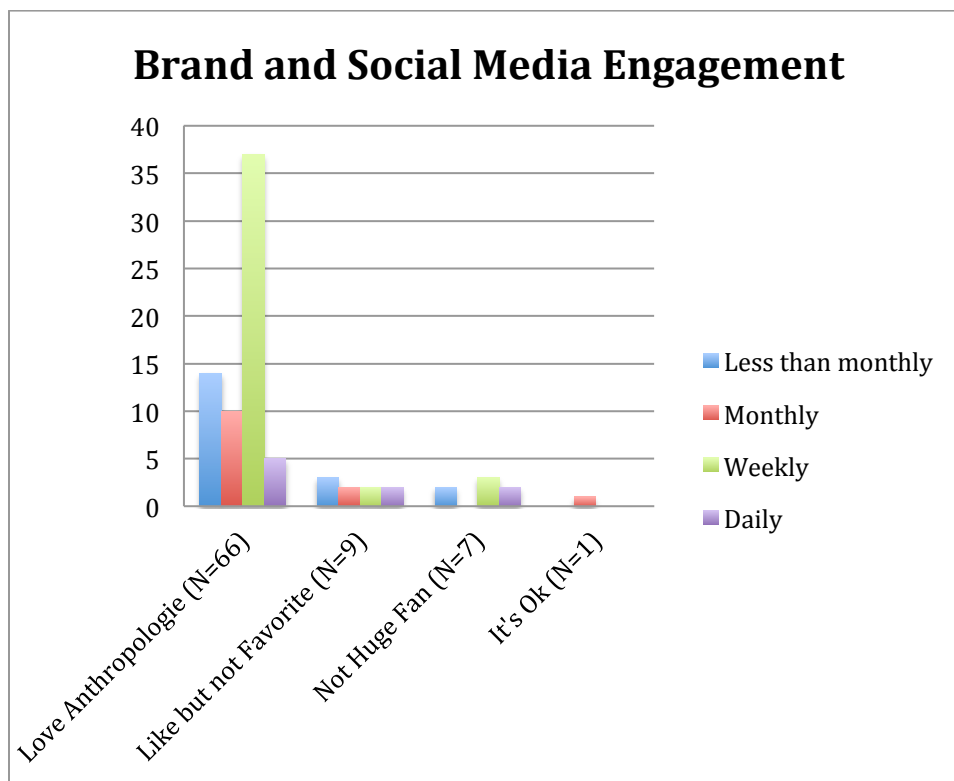


Level of enjoyment of the Anthropologie brand helps provide a baseline of how much they consider themselves to be fans of Anthropologie outside of their level of involvement with Anthropologie's social media, spending or visit frequency. The question, "How much do you enjoy the Anthropologie brand?" was intended to measure this fandom. The responses were written in colloquial form, to best reflect how the respondents themselves might think of their level of enjoyment. By far, most chose "I love Anthropologie!" as their level of enjoyment at 73 percent (92). Eighteen percent (23) said, "I do enjoy it but it's not my favorite clothing brand." "It's ok", a sort of neutral but non-enthusiastic statement, was chosen by 2 percent (2) of respondents, and 7 percent (9) chose "I'm not a huge fan," which was intended as the lowest choice.

Subscription to Anthropologie Social Media



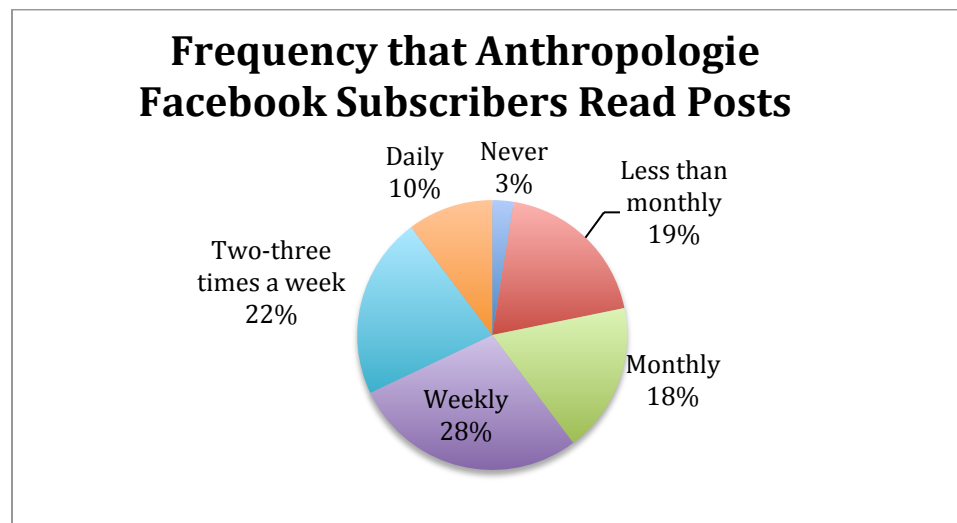
Of the 126 respondents, a total of 63 percent (80) follow Anthropologie on social media, 37 percent (47) do not. Speaking only of the 80 social media users, 98 percent (78) respondents follow Anthropologie on Facebook and 21 percent (17) follow Anthropologie on Twitter. Of these, 19 percent (15) use both Facebook and Twitter to follow Anthropologie, demonstrating that most respondents who follow Anthropologie on Twitter also follow the brand on a second social media site and may be more open to following brands in social media in general. Within the group of Facebook followers, where N=78, 80 percent (63) use Facebook but not Twitter. Within the group of 17 Twitter followers, only 1 percent (2) use Twitter but not Facebook. For these respondents, Facebook remains the more dominant social media to interact with brands.



Eighty-three of 126 participants responded to the social engagement and brand engagement questions. When comparing level of brand enjoyment to social media engagement (which here is simply defined as reading a Facebook or Twitter post), there is a significant increase in social media engagement among those who “love Anthropologie” compared to the other levels of enjoyment. Of

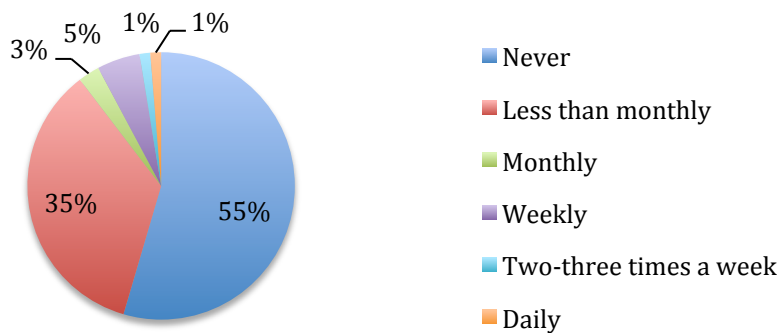
those who “love Anthropologie,” 71 percent (66) engage in social media less than monthly or more often, and 46 percent (42) do so weekly or more often. To compare, 48 percent (9) of those who like Anthropologie but don’t consider it their favorite brand engage in Anthropologie social media less than monthly or more often, and only 17 percent (4) do so weekly or more often.

Interaction with Anthropologie on Facebook



The 78 respondents who “like” Anthropologie on Facebook read Anthropologie’s posts relatively frequently. Over half, 60 percent (47) read Anthropologie’s Facebook posts weekly (28 percent or 22), two to three times a week (22 percent or 17) or daily (10 percent or 8). Eighteen percent (14) read an Anthropologie Facebook post monthly. This “ritualized” use may be fulfilling a utilitarian need per Ruggiero (2000). Of those who do not “like” Anthropologie on Facebook, four still check the Anthropologie Facebook page at least monthly.

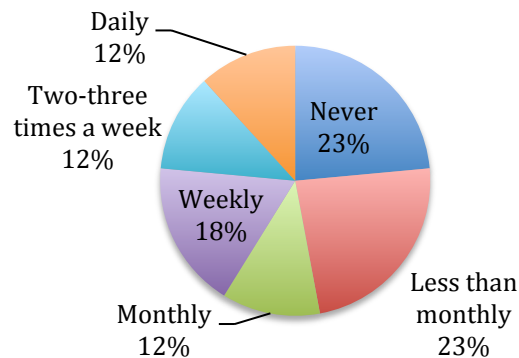
Frequency that Subscribers Interact with an Anthropologie Facebook Post



Interaction with the Facebook posts is less common, even for the 78 who “like” Anthropologie on Facebook. For this question, interaction was defined as “liking” a post or making a comment on a post. Most (55 percent, 43) respondents said they never interact with an Anthropologie Facebook post, 35 percent (27) reported interacting less than monthly, 3 percent (2) said they interact monthly, 5 percent (4) said they interact weekly, and 1 percent (1) interact two to three times a week, and 1 percent (1) interact daily.

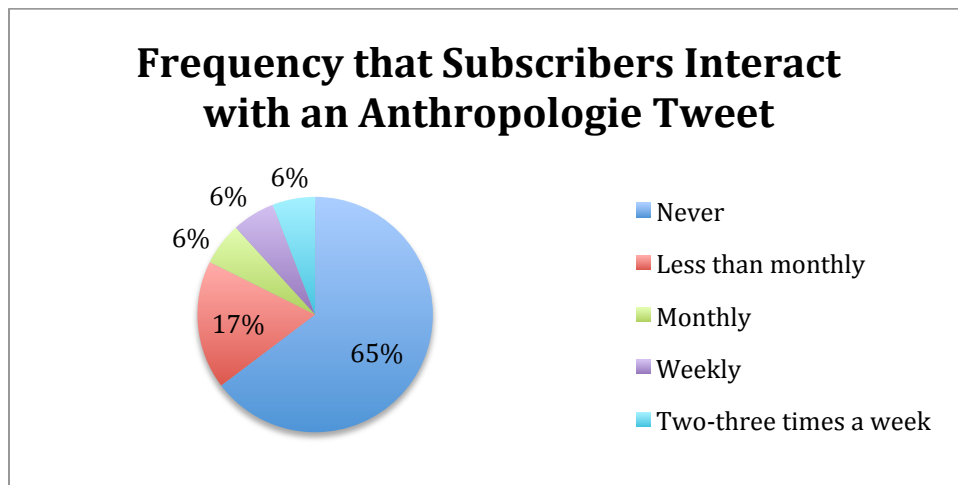
Interaction with Anthropologie on Twitter

Frequency that Anthropologie Twitter Followers Read Tweets



Of the 17 that subscribe to Anthropologie on Twitter, 54 percent read an Anthropologie tweet monthly or more often. 12 percent (2) read monthly, 18 percent (3) read weekly, 12 percent (2)

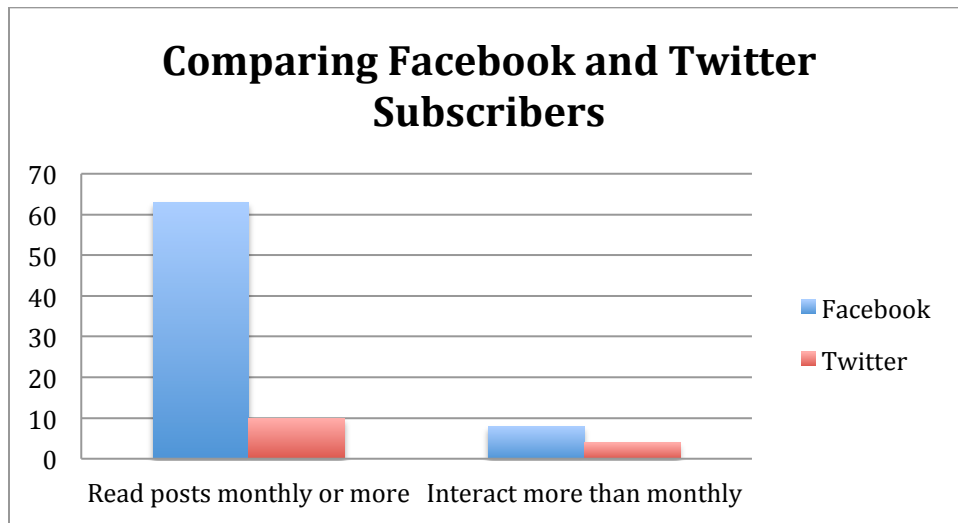
read two to three times a week, and 12 percent (2) read an Anthropologie tweet daily. Of subscribers, 23 percent (4) never read an Anthropologie Twitter post, 23 percent (4) do read less than monthly. Seven non-subscribers report reading an Anthropologie tweet at least less than monthly.



Interaction was measured with the question: “How often do you interact with Anthropologie or other Anthropologie followers on Twitter?” Of the 17 that subscribe to Anthropologie on Twitter, only six percent (1) respondent per category indicated that they interact with an Anthropologie tweet monthly, weekly, or two to three times a week. Less than monthly garnered 17 percent (3) respondents, but never was the most common response at 65 percent (11).

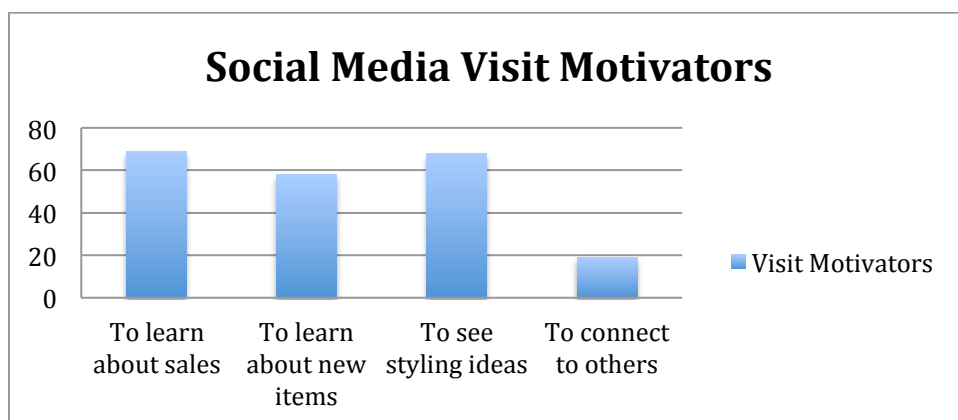
A third interaction question asked if “Do you ever re-tweet, re-post or discuss any Anthropologie posts with friends?” Here, respondents could think about Facebook and Twitter and if they ever re-share a post through social media or discuss a post offline with friends. Of the 80 respondents who subscribe to either Facebook or Twitter, 13 percent (Eight percent [6] monthly, four percent [3] weekly, and 1 percent [1] multiple times a week.) had reshared a post monthly or more often. Eleven percent (9) had shared a post less often than monthly, and 74 percent (59) had never shared a post.

Comparing Facebook and Twitter Subscribers



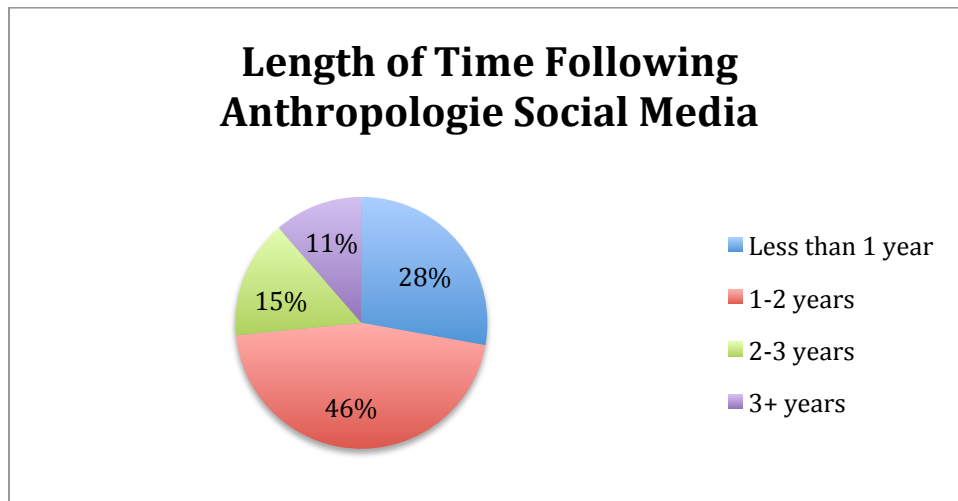
Of those who subscribe to Anthropologie on Facebook (78 respondents), 80 percent (63) read posts monthly or more, and 10 percent (8) interact more than monthly. Of the 17 Anthropologie Twitter subscribers, 10 read posts monthly or more often and 4 interact with posts monthly or more often. There is some overlap between the Facebook and Twitter subscribers; of the 15-member subscribers to both Facebook and Twitter group, all (15) read posts monthly or more often, 60 percent (9) interact with posts at least monthly, and two respondents interact more than monthly.

Specific Uses and Gratifications



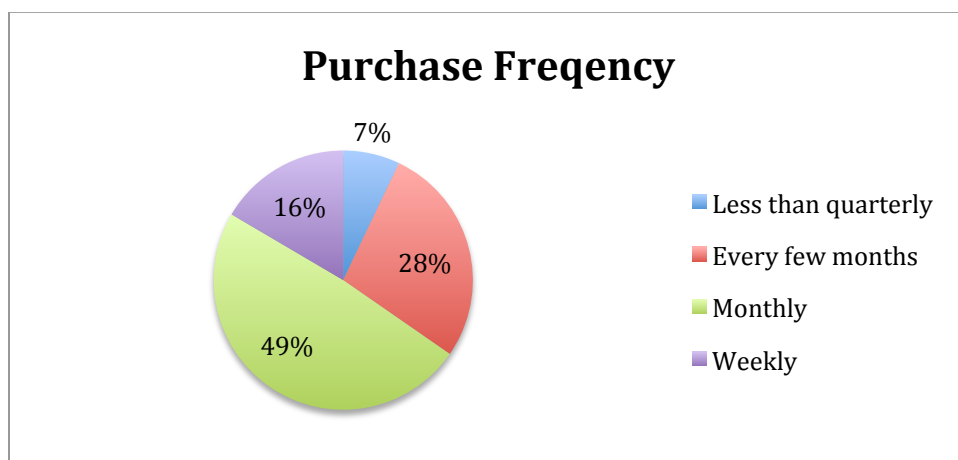
These uses and gratifications were developed from topics of posts Anthropologie uses on its Facebook and Twitter accounts. Functional benefits are learning about sales (economic use), seeing styling ideas (informational use) and learning about new items (informational use). Experiential benefits were connecting with others (social and interactive use) and seeing styling ideas (entertainment). Styling ideas appears in both categories because it can be used functionally to gain inspiration or as entertainment. These uses fall into Park's (2009) list of reasons people join Facebook groups and Park's (2011) functional/experiential categorization method of uses and gratifications for social media. Many respondents (N=78) chose more than one option on this multiple choice question. Learning about sales was chosen by 88 percent (69) of respondents who subscribe to Anthropologie social media, styling ideas was chosen by 87 percent (68) of respondents, learning about new items was chosen by 74 percent (58), and connecting with others was chosen by 24 percent (19) of respondents. Respondents could also choose "other." In this, the four respondents wrote in their own reasons for following Anthropologie, including that they work at Anthropologie, to learn about new projects and collaborations, to read product reviews, to hear the stories behind the brand, and following as an expression of interest in the brand. Additionally, one person wrote, "Unsure. No special deals are offered. There's no real benefit to me to follow Anthropologie." This person may be referring to a lack of "Facebook fans only" type promotions or other insiders rewards exclusive to social media followers.

Length of Time Following Anthropologie Social Media



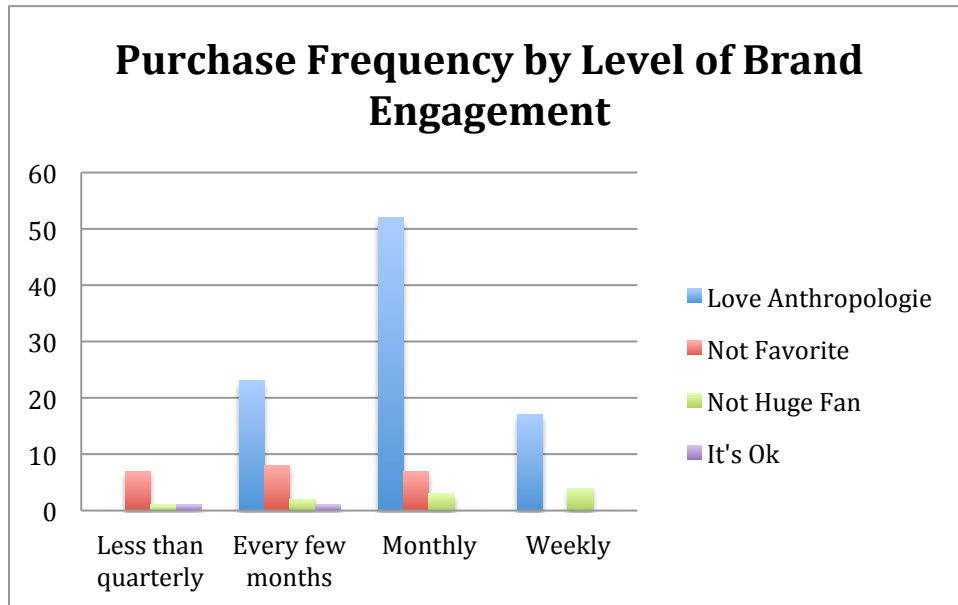
The following percentages are based on 79 respondents who indicated they follow Anthropologie social media and indicated a time period. One person who indicated “don’t remember,” and therefore was not included in this chart. The most frequent length of time following social media is one to two years with 46 percent (36) respondents choosing this answer. Next, less than one year had 28% (22) respondents, two to three years was chosen by 15 percent (12). Over three years had 11 percent (9) of respondents.

Purchase Frequency

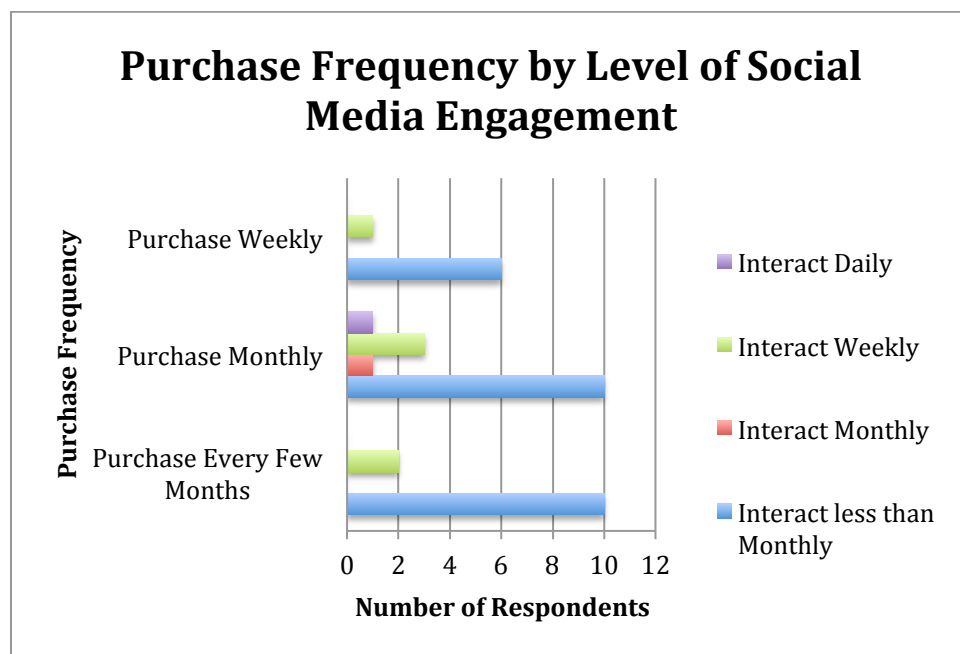


When answering “how often do you purchase items from Anthropologie?” most of the 126 survey participants chose “monthly” at 49 percent (62), followed by 28 percent (35) purchasing “every few

months,” 17 percent (21) purchasing weekly, and 7 percent (9) purchasing less than once every three months.

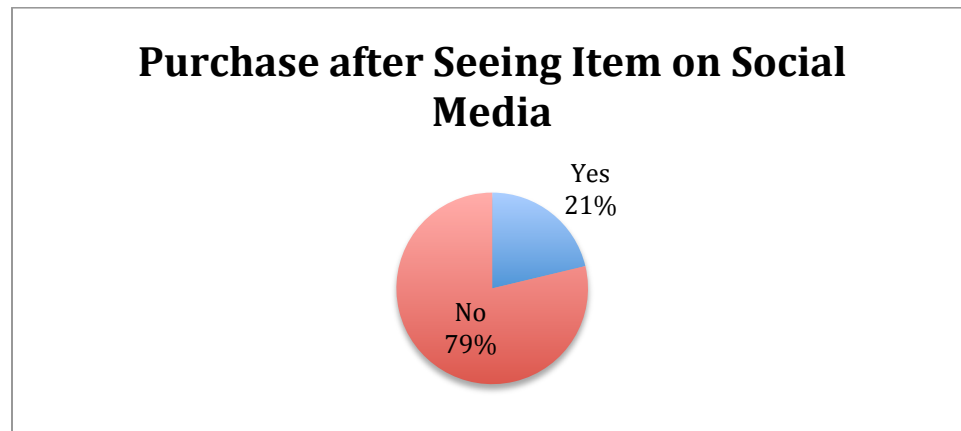


This chart includes 92 respondents who say they love Anthropologie. Comparing brand engagement to purchasing frequency, we see that 66 percent (23) of those who purchase every few months, 84 percent (52) of those who purchase monthly and 81 percent (17) of those who purchase weekly say they love Anthropologie. Higher purchase frequency is correlated with higher enjoyment of the brand.



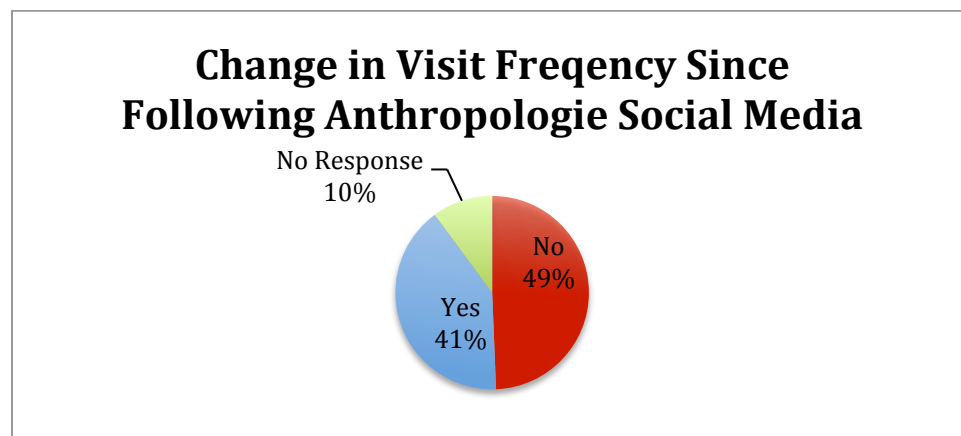
Although no one who purchased less than every few months was active with Anthropologie's social media, 29 percent (10) of the 35 respondents who purchase every few months interact with social media less than monthly, and 6 percent (2) interact with social media weekly. Of the 49 percent (62) of the respondents that purchase monthly, 16 percent (10) interact less than monthly, 2 percent (1) interact monthly, 5 percent (3) interact weekly and 2 percent (1) interact daily. Of the 16 percent (21) of the respondents that purchase weekly, 29 percent (6) interact less than monthly and only 5 percent (1) interact weekly. Overall, most people interact with Anthropologie's social media on a less than monthly basis. But monthly purchasers seem to be more broadly engaged in the brand social media to varying degrees and are also the larger contingent of all the groups. Perhaps brands can view monthly purchasers as their target social media audience.

Purchase after Social Media Prompt



Only 21 percent (27) of 126 respondents said that they have made a purchase of a specific item after being cued to shop by a social media post. All 27 of these respondents follow Anthropologie on Facebook, and 30 percent (8) of them also follow Anthropologie on Twitter. It is possible that seeing an item on social media may contribute to an eventual sale for more Anthropologie fans, but they do not recognize the contributing influence at this time.

Visit Frequency



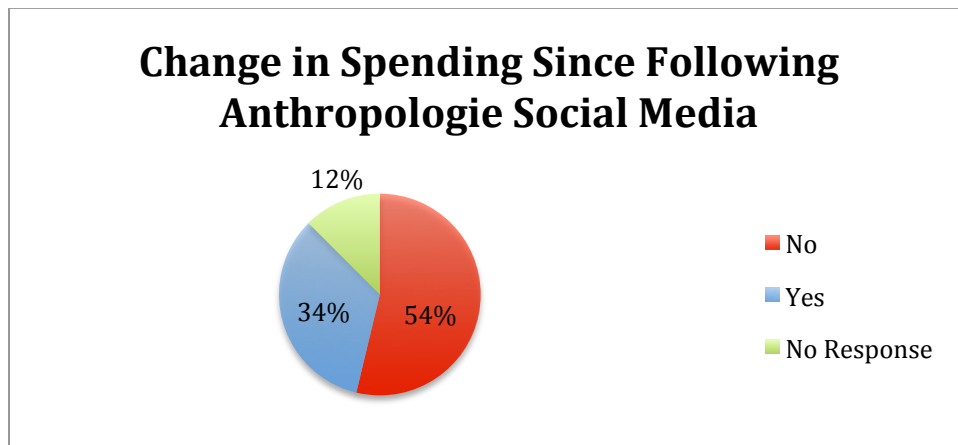
The question “Have you noticed any change in how often you visit Anthropologie stores or its website since beginning to follow Anthropologie social media?” allowed for open-ended responses. 40 percent (32) of respondents who follow Anthropologie on social media indicated yes, 49 percent (39) indicated no change, and nine did not respond. However, for these respondents, social media

seems to be a strong driver to think about specific items. One respondent said, "I feel like I visit them more often - by interacting with them via social media, I feel the brand is often more on the top of my mind." Another said, "I am in the store 2 -3 times a week and on the website/Facebook page at 7 days per week." Another said that although she already checks the website daily, "if I see a post on Facebook I may go back to the website to check it out."

Twenty percent (26) of all 126 participants volunteered that they follow Anthropologie-centric blogs and that these blogs influenced interest in Anthropologie's products although this was not explicitly asked in the survey. This number is probably low as had this question been asked on the survey, it is likely that many more would have indicated that they follow Anthropologie-centric blogs. "My anthro purchases have skyrocketed since I started reading anthro blogs I visit the website every day and go into the store three or four times a month," said a respondent. Another said, "I have totally fallen into the 'but it looks good on others so I must have it' trap since I started reading others' blogs." Another spoke specifically to the motivation to not lose a coveted item, saying, "Absolutely!! I never even considered purchasing items at full price at Anthro until now. I'm always worried about how much I'll wear items or how they'll look on me. But once I see them on someone else in their reviews, it makes me less hesitant to go in and try on things I wouldn't have otherwise. And seeing other people and their desperate searches for certain popular items makes me more likely to buy something before it disappears from the racks!" Another spoke to the value of real people styling the clothes, "Yes. More styling options and fan comments lead me to view an item differently and thus desiring and ultimately purchasing it." Blogs also function as important news sources, as one respondent said, "I visit daily now to check on any updates to my 'wish list'. I check blogs daily for new posts and sale updates, and I always check Anthropologie reviews before purchasing online. I do that weekly." Some respondents explained that although they do follow Anthropologie's social media, they don't consider it as much of an influence as the blogs, "No. I

certainly noticed a change in how often I visit the website, seek items based on my following of blogs, but not via following Anthropologie's Facebook or Twitter.

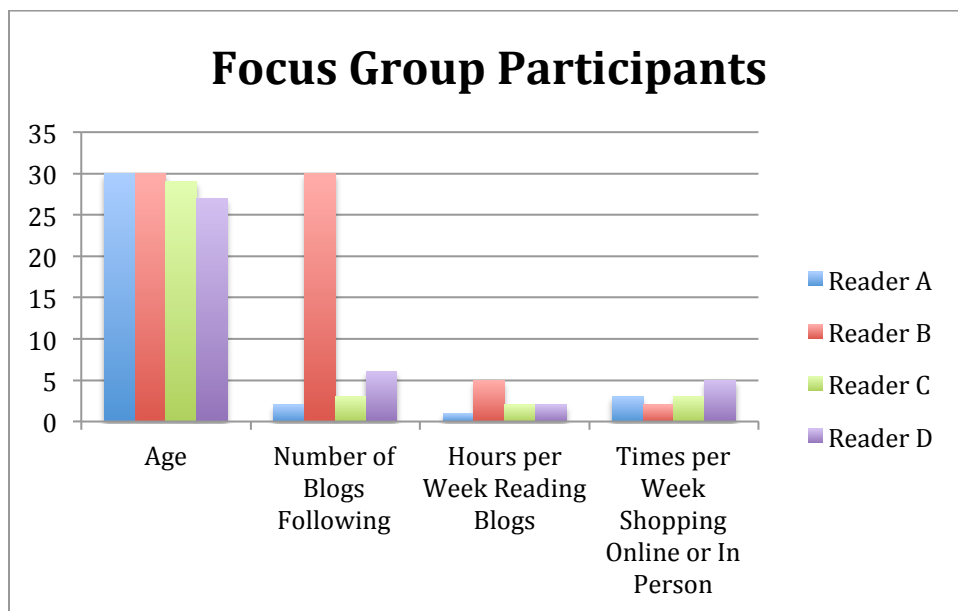
Spending Change



The admittedly subjective question “Have you noticed any change in how much money you spend with Anthropologie since beginning to follow their social media?” received 70 open ended responses, of which 43 were coded No, and 26 were coded Yes. One respondent said, “Probably more. If there is a post of a item I like and other followers are reviewing or "liking" it, I am more likely to purchase it.” (This answer was coded as a “yes” response.) Another said, “Yes, I spend more. I like when outfits are organized together and I can see pictures of styling ideas.” People often resist the suggestion that their choices are affected by advertising, and this may have contributed to the high number of “no” responses. Again, blogs were a factor, as more people indicated blogs as being stronger persuaders than social media, and had blogs been included as “social media,” more yes responses would likely have been received. One respondent said, “Yes, I spend a significant amount more. Probably hundreds as opposed to a \$20 blouse every few months.” Another said, “Yes. Again I spend about 3 to 4 times as much now that I read the blogs.” Yet another said, “Yes. When I see others wearing cute things on blogs, it makes me want to give it a go as well. Without all the exposure I wouldn't see or purchase as much, I'm sure.” Social media was sometimes mentioned as a lesser influence than blogs, “I tend to spend more based on my following of various blogs

dedicated to or highlighting Anthro products. I more readily learn of popbacks, sales, special promotions and/or see an item reviewed by a blogger and go to check out the item myself. However, this is all the effort of bloggers not Anthro's own social media.” (Popbacks are previously sold-out items that have reappeared on the website as “in stock” due to a customer return.)

Focus Group Results



The primary goal of the focus group was to discover what uses and gratifications personal style blogs meet for readers, and also compare these to their uses and gratifications of for following brands on social media. Four women between the ages 27 and 30 participated for about two and a half hours on June 23, 2012. They have spent an average 2.75 years reading blogs. (Two had read personal style blogs for two years, one for three years, and one for four years.) They spend an average of 2.5 hours reading personal style blogs per week (range=1-5) and followed anywhere from two to 30 blogs regularly. All participants visit a retailer online or in person at least once a week, with Reader C saying she visits five times in a week. They indicated a strong preference for online visits. Although it was not known when she was invited to participate in the focus group, Reader B has written her own personal style blog for a little over a year.

Each focus group participant discovered personal style blogs in a different way. Reader A was sent a link by her sister; Reader D saw a blog referenced on an online magazine website; Reader B visited a brand website (Charming Charlie) and saw that the brand published a list of blogs that had mentioned it in a post; and Reader C wanted to see how a specific product from Anthropologie fit a person who wore larger than a size zero, so she searched for the item on the search engine Google.com, and discovered a blog that had reviewed that item. The online retailer ModCloth also holds promotions where it names a product after a featured blogger, so Reader C discovered more style blogs through this practice. All also discovered more blogs through “blogrolls,” lists of blogs that a blogger links to from their own blog.

When prompted, “Why did you choose to follow certain style blogs over others?” participants shared what they find appealing in blogs: Mix of clothing sources (“high and low” brands, thrift stores), bloggers who share their personality through their writing, bloggers who include their faces in their photographs instead of just a body view, good quality photos and video (not blurry, in nice settings, not taken in bathroom mirrors) that makes it easy to see the clothes, well-written posts that are not too lengthy, and a focus on more than just clothes to include makeup and accessories. They complained that some bloggers are “clearly just doing this because they want to be a model,” or are too narcissistic or boring in their writing “I don’t like it when they use the same phrases constantly, such as ‘I love me some polka-dots.’” The idea of authenticity and genuine-ness of the blogger was raised—they want the blogger to be “someone I’d be friends with and has a style that appeals to me.” Being able to relate to the author’s style and voice was clearly an important factor in maintaining interest in a personal style blog over time.

Blogs often serve as a source of style inspiration and education. Reader B said, “Before I started reading style blogs I had about 10 outfits I’d cycle through, now I have more ideas.” The

participants agreed that they use blogs to get ideas of “how to put outfits together, coordinate different pieces,” and “see how new trends are interpreted.” Reader D said, “I’m trying to identify what it is that I like, and how do I feel about it in real life vs. in blogs.”

In addition to style inspiration, blogs offer readers insight into the fit, potential flaws of items. Seeing how an item may fit is important, as Reader A said, “if you find a blogger that has a similar shape as you, then you can see how something will look on you. So without having to try it on, you know if it might be an option for you.” Reader C, “I do think of it like research because I’m big on doing research on anything I buy, and it’s a way to look into the styles that you’re thinking about buying.”

Blogs are also a source of entertainment and a way to take a break. Reader D said, “I tend to follow blogs that are hyper creative, crazy, things I’d never wear but are visually intriguing. I really enjoy those.” Reader A agreed that reading blogs was entertaining, but went beyond entertainment: “In a way, it feels like useful entertainment, not a complete waste of time because you’re gathering ideas and it’s fun. It’s not like reading politics. Practical in a fun way so doesn’t have to be depressing like news. I don’t always feel like it’s a waste of time.” Participants said reading blogs is something they look forward to as a treat: “If I have a break coming up at work, [reading blogs] is a reward for finishing something,” Reader C said. Reading blogs also serves as a relaxation activity. Reader D said she reads blogs “If I have free time. It’s what I’ll do if it’s raining or nighttime.”



Figure 2 So Anthro, April 12, 2012

The readers are primarily looking for bloggers whose style and budget are relatable to their lives, rather than aspirational because they want to be able to reinterpret styling ideas they see on the blogs into their own style and wardrobes. As Reader A put it, “I still like the ones that shop at stores I can access. I read Vogue for aspirational images.” The readers do not like it when a blog has too many partners or company-sponsored posts. Reader D said, “Blogs get bad if they’re oversaturated with company partnerships or have too strong a focus on a brand... now you’re not “me” anymore, not relatable. I know they’re being influenced.” Reader A, speaking of posts where the blogger reviews a product they received as a free trial in exchange for writing about it, “Even though they say all their opinions are their own, you don’t believe them.”

Reading style blogs also emerged as one way to indulge an interest that a person may not share with others in their daily lives. The readers discussed the fact that many of their friends are not as interested in fashion and an interest in fashion is not considered serious or important, so reading style blogs is one way to fill this interest. As Reader C said, “Everyone has a hobby, this is my hobby,” to which Reader D agreed, “Everyone spends their money differently.”

Participating in blogs by commenting was not something the readers did often. Only Reader B said she commented on blogs where she’s made friends with the writers. She is motivated to comment if a blogger poses a question, or if a new blogger doesn’t have many comments, she’ll “send a compliment to them so they know someone is reading.” Reader A said she while she rarely comments, she “especially doesn’t comment if others have already said the same thing. I don’t want to repeat.”

Purchasing habits are influenced by reading blogs, but not necessarily to directly purchase the items seen on a given blog. Participants said they use the blogs to “figure out what [cuts and styles] work on [my body type],” to find “things that go with other things in my closet,” and to figure out

“what I need to add and where can I find it the cheapest.” They also discussed how viewing how bloggers incorporate trends can make them more interested in and more comfortable trying that trend, as it gives them “enough ideas and [they’ve] seen different ways to wear something.”

The blog readers also discussed following brands on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. While three of the four said they don’t really follow brands on social media unless to enter a contest, Reader B said she finds following a brand on social media makes her “want to shop more because you’re getting inundated with products.” While they all expressed that they understood why a brand would feel it necessary to have a presence on social media, they didn’t like following brands on Facebook because they wanted to keep Facebook as a space for friends and family only. They didn’t like seeing messages from the brands show up in their Facebook “news feed,” where new posts from friends and posts from companies or personalities users have “liked” appear. “You want to consume brands when you want to consume them, not constantly,” said Reader A. Reader D complained that she found secret social media follower-only sales “gimmicky” and “fake” and seeing them made her distrust the brand. The blog readers discussed what type of content is acceptable to them and how often a brand can post. Reader C said once a month was acceptable, Reader A said once a week. They agreed they want to see relatable content. Reader D suggested this might be an event held near their location. Reader A said she would like “meaningful content, something you can apply to you” such as helpful tips such as ideas to incorporate a new color into your wardrobe, or something to participate in like post an image of yourself wearing a new trend.

Following brands on social media did not improve their relationships with a brand or their image of a brand, overall, agreed the blog readers, and may even cause them to like a brand less if that brand posted too often. They felt that following a brand was making a strong public statement of their likes and should be reflective of a genuine strong interest in that brand, rather than a casual way to get information about a brand. In addition, they didn’t want to reveal too much on a public

networking site like Facebook, as Reader C said, “I like to maintain an air of mystery, I don’t want everyone to know where I shop. I don’t think anyone cares where I shop.” And Reader A said, “I don’t want all my friends to wear the same thing.”

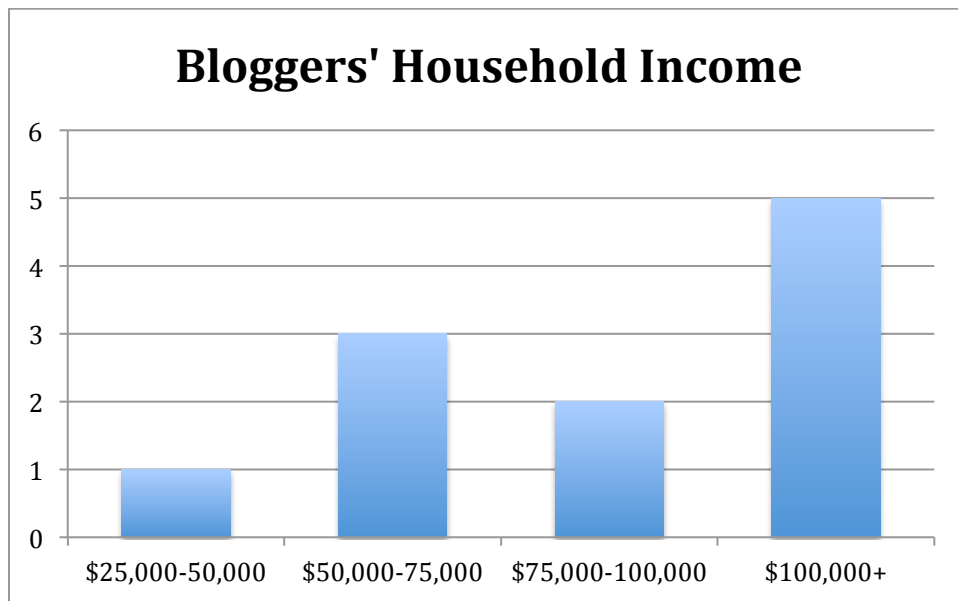
When asked if following a brand on social media affected their purchase decisions, the blog readers agreed they preferred to receive information about products and sales via email. Seeing a post on social media might “remind me of something, and then I might check the website, but it’s more annoying [than helpful],” said Reader D. Part of the problem stems from the ability to customize what types of messages a user will be able to see on Facebook, as compared to how many companies allow subscribers to choose to subscribe to topical email lists. Reader A pointed out that with email, she can read the subject line and decide if it’s interesting enough to open. Reader B agreed, saying, “Right, with Facebook, you can only decide to see all or none of the posts, so why follow [a brand]?” For this user, style blogs have replaced following brands on social media. She said, “I sort of followed brands on social media first, but now that I know about style blogs, I like them better so I’ve chosen the level of “don’t show me updates” or unliked brands on social media.”

Blogger Interview Results

For the purposes of this study, only personal style blogs written by women were included, mainly because Anthropologie does not sell men’s clothing and therefore women are the primary target audience. The researcher interviewed 11 women bloggers over the phone or by emailing the participant an open-ended questionnaire. All bloggers are Anthropologie customers to varying degrees of loyalty. The average age of the 11 bloggers is 28, with the youngest aged 23 and the oldest aged 36.

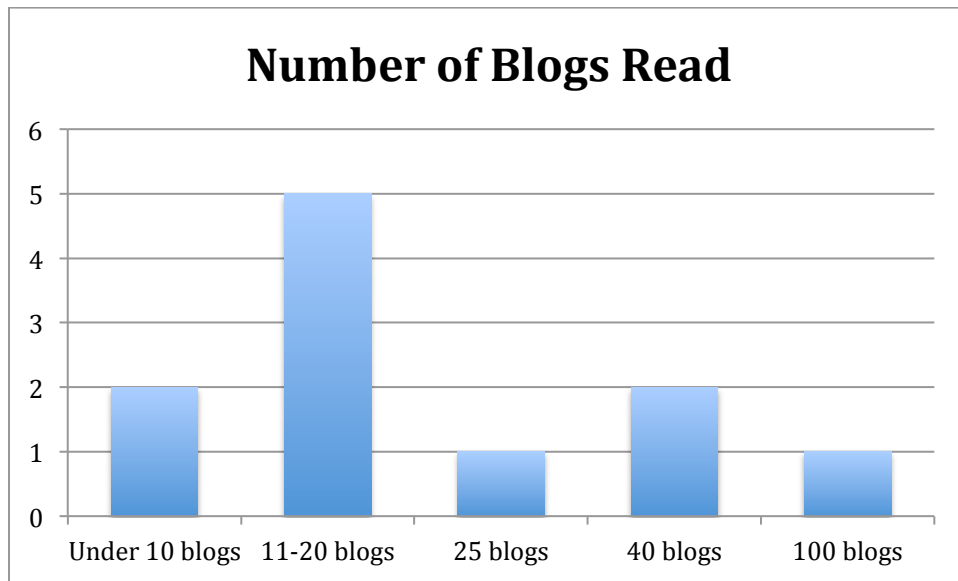
The interviews had four main question categories: What are the bloggers drawn to in other blogs? Why do they write their own blogs? How do they use brands' social media and what do they like to see offered? How does writing a personal style blog affect the author's own purchasing behavior?

Household Income



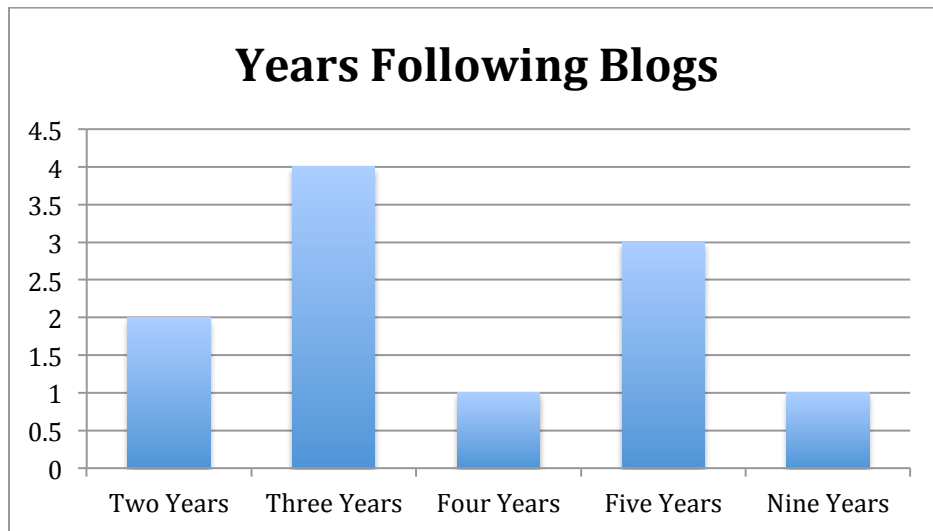
Of the 11 bloggers, five of them have a household income of \$100,000 or more. Five more earn between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually, while just one earns between \$25,000 and \$50,000. The lowest earning blogger, Blogger K, is also the youngest, at age 23, and does not live with a romantic partner.

Number of Personal Style Blogs the Bloggers Read Regularly



The 11 bloggers follow a wide range of different blogs, with an average of 18.6 blogs read by each, once the outlier of 100 is removed from the data set. The graph above only reflects how many blogs the bloggers read consistently. Blogger K, who follows 100 blogs regularly, does so by subscribing to them through her Google Reader (an RSS feed complication service offered by Google), and while she reads some more in depth than others, she looks at all of them. Blogger J, who reads five blogs regularly, said she mainly follows blogs written by her friends and often participates by helping to take the photographs. Blogger H says she has over 100 in her Bloglovin' and Google Reader feeds, but only follows 10 regularly. Blogger F follows 12 blogs regularly; Blogger A follows 12 consistently but occasionally reads posts from a total of 47 favorite blogs. Blogger I reads 40 blogs systematically by once a week reading through all the posts that have published since her last visit on a selection of the blogs. She estimates she checks in on blogs four to five times a month. Blogger D regularly follows 20, but keeps track of 60 total.

Years Following Blogs



The bloggers had an average of four years spent reading personal style blogs. One blogger had been reading them for nine years. The most common response was three years, with four bloggers answering thus.

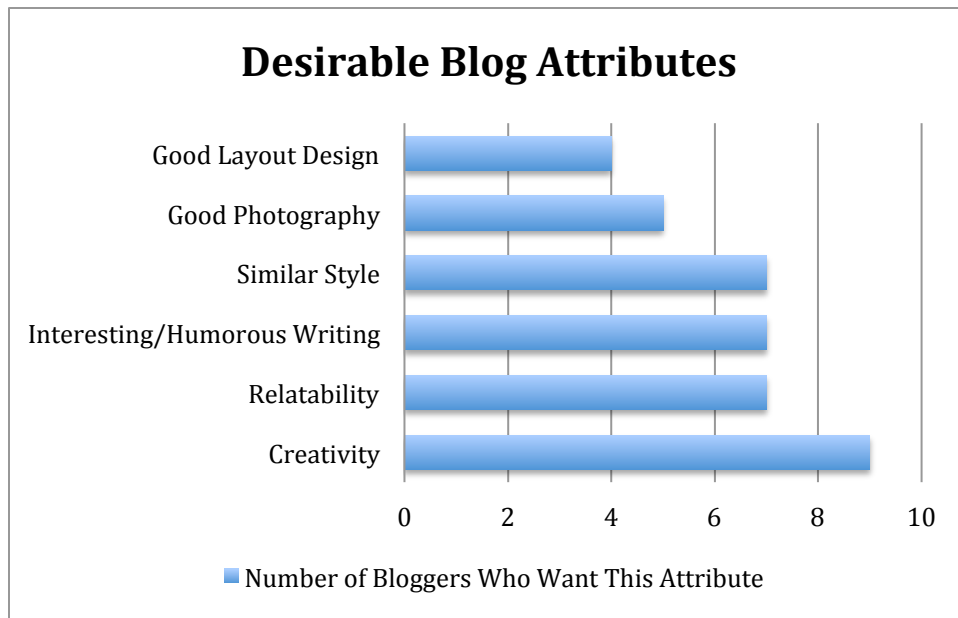
Reasons to Follow Blogs

The bloggers read blogs for a number of different reasons. All are drawn to the visual nature of style blogs, where they find photos of outfits to inspire their own sartorial choices. Many mentioned enjoying good photography. Blogger K said she reads personal style blogs for “all the same things I grew up reading fashion magazines for: relaxing, inspiration.” Others want to see how clothing looks on non-model bodies and read fit reviews, get styling ideas and learn about new items. Reading blogs is one way to get inspired to try new things. This is true for Blogger D, who said, “Before I started reading blogs I had more black and white clothes, and style blogs helped me work more color into my closet.”

As bloggers themselves, some mentioned that they like to see how other bloggers write, take photographs, interact with their readers and work with sponsors in order to improve their own blogs. Some follow blogs of writers that they have gotten to know through blogging, others read

blogs as a way to meet others with similar interests. Several have worked with sponsors themselves to offer giveaway contests and to review products.

Desirable Blog Attributes



Creativity

The creativity expressed in a blog is a draw for 82 percent (9) of interview participants. The participants are looking for something different than they have thought of themselves. Blogger H said, "I think my biggest goal is does it inspire me to do something different with my own blog, with my closet, with my home, etc. I want to feel that urge to try something new by reading a blog."

Relatability

Relatability to the blog author was mentioned by 64 percent (7) of participants as an attribute that inspires return visits to the blog. As Blogger H stated, "I want to read blogs that are applicable and relevant to my life where I feel like I could be friends with the author and really understand where he/she is coming from." Blogger B felt a blogger's style was more attainable when it was more similar in style and budget to her own style and financial means, and said. "I want to be able to take

creative inspiration from them (the blogs), I can window shop from reading them.” Blogger J said, “As blogging becomes more of a saturated market, the ladies are starting to look more and more like fashion models, but it wasn’t always that way. I’m nowhere near sample size, and I have many physical and character flaws. I tend to gravitate toward the more relatable gals who lay it all out there for the world to see, who aren’t afraid to embrace and even celebrate their quirks. I like feeling like I could be friends with them. Aspirational blogs are beautiful to look at, but can sometimes make me a little too self-aware. I imagine it might be like that for other readers.”

Writing

Interesting and/or humorous writing was mentioned by 64 percent of bloggers but its importance seemed to be dependent on how much the reader visited blogs for the stories and personality or if they visited mainly to scroll through inspirational outfit images. Blogger F said, “While I like seeing photos of outfits, I also want to know a bit about the people I’m reading about. Did they pick up their skirt at a thrift store? Have they been drooling over those sandals for months? What makes them tick and put together an outfit in a particular way? For me it has to be a good balance of wordy content and pictures.” In contrast, Blogger A, who is working to become a personal stylist, said, “I don’t typically read the blog stories; I mainly just look at the pictures and read the style notes. I love seeing how different people dress and use it to inspire me with my own style and work.” Blogger J has her own handmade clothing line and frequently showcases her designs on her blog.

Similar Taste in Style

Sharing a similar sense of style was also important to 64 percent of participants because they find it easier to translate into how they put together clothing. Blogger C said, “I usually follow other bloggers who like the same brands as I do, who have similar body types as mine, thinking that if something looks cute on them it may on me.” Others enjoy reading blogs written by those with different taste because they find it more inspiring. Blogger E said, “A lot of the bloggers I follow

don't actually have the same style as me, but I think that's a good thing. This means that they come up with color, pattern, and silhouette combinations that are completely fresh (to me), and which I can then take and experiment with through my own clothing and tastes."

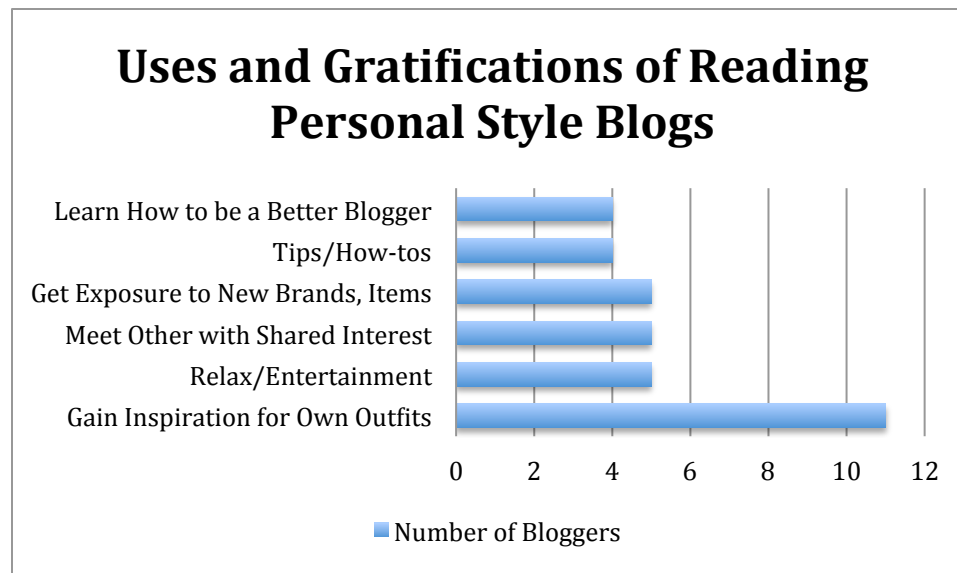
Photography

Good photography that is not blurry, grainy or too dark shows the clothes better. All respondents mentioned styling images as a reason they visit blogs, and 45 percent (5) also mentioned good or interesting photography as an element that makes a blog more appealing to them. Blogger D said, "I like the ones with outdoorsy pictures rather than in the same building." Blogger K explained that photography is an important factor in choosing to follow a blog. She said, "Stunning photography makes a blog, it doesn't have to do with how expensive the clothes are or even the outfits. I love fashion photography."

Layout

The layout of a blog can enhance the reading experience of that blog. Thirty-six percent (4) mentioned they prefer "clean" looks, and Blogger K further explained that she likes to see a design that "reflects the clothing style of the blogger, a theme that is all encompassing, and I always pay attention to the ones that have custom buttons that match the rest of their layout." These elements are important to her because if "I'm going to spend an hour daily going thru my [Google] Reader, I want to enjoy what I'm seeing. Same as I'd rather pick up a magazine than read it online."

Uses and Gratifications of Reading Blogs



Bloggers' uses and gratifications were determined from answers to several questions:

- Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?
- Why are those goals important to you?
- What do you like about reading blogs?
- What attributes of a blog do you like?
- Why are those attributes important to you?

Several questions were used as the source because often topics that had already been discussed in previous questions were clearly important, but not repeated in the goals and objectives response.

Gain Inspiration

All participants, 100 percent, read personal style blogs to become inspired to create their own outfits and to think of new combinations to wear their clothing. Blogger G said, "A lot of the time my goal is to gain inspiration. If I go through a few days or weeks feeling like, 'I don't have anything to wear,' I like being able to go through my blog list and suddenly think, 'Ah, I could wear this top with this skirt' or whatever. I like being inspired to try new things: new brands, new pieces, new styles, new colors, new combinations." Blogger J said, "I also love seeing how different bloggers will wear

the same piece. A mass-produced top from Zara or H&M might be worn in a myriad of ways, depending on who is styling it.”

Relaxation and Entertainment

Reading blogs serves as a way to relax while being entertained and was a use for 45 percent (5) of participants. As Blogger J said, “It’s a break from the daily grind. It’s like reading a magazine, only you might think, ‘I can wear/afford that!’” Fashion was seen as a hobby for many of the blogger participants, and reading blogs was an important way to participate in that hobby. Blogger B said, “My interest is personal style, and seeing what others are posting keeps me engaged. It’s pleasurable to indulge in aesthetics. I’ve always enjoyed TV or other things that focus on fashion, and blogs took it whole another level, they are more relatable, and reading them gives me perspective. The blogs I tune into focus not only on clothes but other aspects of life. It’s important to nurture things that make you happy and that are enjoyable.”

Meet Others Who Share a Similar Interest

Meeting others with a shared interest in fashion was cited by 45 percent of interviewees, who spoke of enjoying blogs written by people with diverse interests. Reading blogs, Blogger B said, is an “interesting introduction to people who have similarities to me that I wouldn’t have otherwise met. Thru blogging I’ve seen a lot of creativity and artistic, crafty, lifestyle choices. I was always interested in these topics, but never dug into them as much and got to explore all the possibilities, now it’s nice to come across others with an interest that they enjoy developing.”

New Purchasing Ideas

Forty-five percent read blogs to get ideas for more things to buy. This category of use includes gaining exposure to new brands or items or learning about sales. Blogger J said, “I like finding out about new designers, brands, or stores through my peers. I tend to stay within my usual circle and

rarely explore beyond my favorite haunts, so it opens me up to new discoveries.” Blogger C said, “One of my favorite things to do is shop (alone, online, with friends, etc). I like adding pretty things to my closet and being able to style these things in a way that is fun and different every day. Reading style blogs helps me achieve these goals.”

Learning information about these brands and items is helpful to the participants. Blogger I said that she likes that through blogs she can stay up-to-date with Anthropologie news, hear about sale information, get sale codes, read fit reviews and find items or brands that aren’t from Anthropologie but are similar, “something that I would wear but wouldn’t know about,” she said.

Access Tips and Instructions

The ability to find tips online is a useful feature for 36 percent (4) of participants. Blogger D said, “I love when blogs give beauty tips and how-tos for hair and makeup. There are some women who look so great and so it can be hard to approach other women (to ask how they did something), so it’s great that [bloggers] are willing to share.”

Becoming a Better Blogger

Reading blogs is also a good way to learn how to become a better blogger, and 36 percent participants stated it is one reason they read blogs. Blogger K listed several things she pays attention to on blogs, “I’m always trying to learn tips on fashion photography, I can learn from the way they interact with their readers, I’m always trying to become better myself.” Blogger F said, “My blog is pretty small in both readership and popularity. I like reading blogs to see what I can do better. I love hearing about how blogs became popular or what they did to grow their little piece of the Internet. Seeing photos or how-to’s also inspires me to try my own.”

Writing Personal Style Blogs

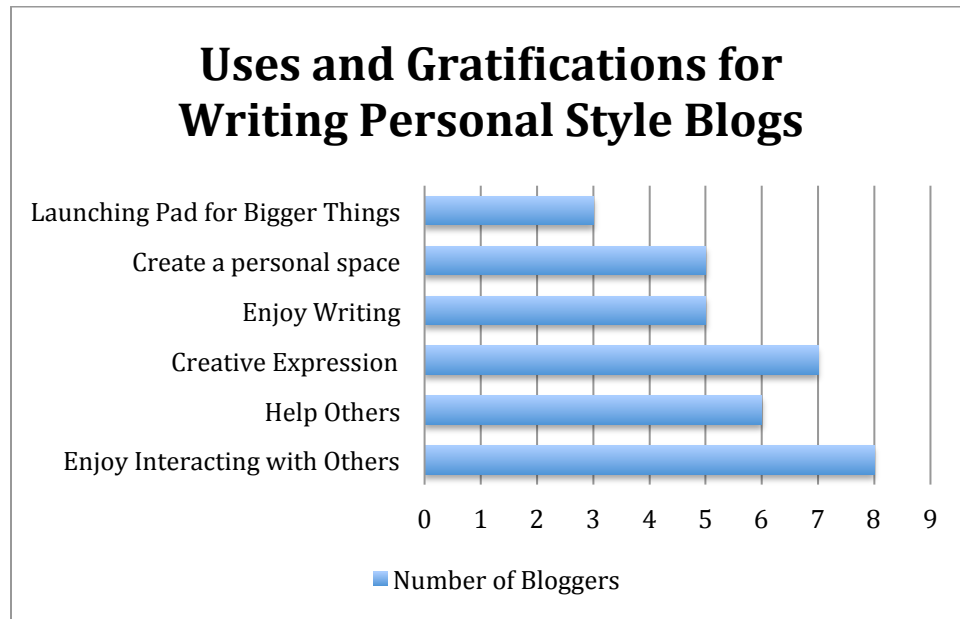
The women had different reasons from transitioning from merely being a reader of personal style blogs to writing her own and publishing it publically. Blogger D said, “I guess I was trying to decide my place, so to speak. I had a lot of girlfriends who were excellent crafters or cooks, but that wasn’t my niche, and [styling clothes] is something

that I’m good at. It’s my thing.” Blogger I started her blog after receiving a lot of encouragement from others in the Anthropologie blogging community as she frequently submitted “reader outfit” photos to a popular blog, and she realized she could offer Anthropologie-inspired do-it-yourself (DIY) crafting ideas to fellow readers. Blogger K said she started her blog as a way to learn how to use the blogging software Wordpress, which she needed to understand for her job. Several others mentioned they’d maintained a personal journal blog for a while, and eventually transitioned into writing primarily about clothing, which led to them starting their current blogs. Blogger B started the blog as a way to monitor and curtail her shopping, Blogger C to push herself to be more creative with her clothing, and Blogger J, who works from home, to motivate herself to get dressed daily.



Figure 3 DIY Cirrus Duvet Tutorial. Neroli Blossoms, Nov. 30, 2011.

Uses and Gratifications of Writing Blogs



Enjoy interacting with others

By far, the most common use and gratifications of writing a personal style blog were interacting with readers, and by extension, other bloggers who comment. Seventy-three percent (8) bloggers reported this as something they like about blogging. Blogger B said, “Definitely there have been a few times when I’ve questioned why I keep blogging, asking myself what contribution am I really making for myself or for readers? I enjoy blogging, but the reason that I keep coming back is I enjoy coming away from my everyday norm, and interacting with people that I’ve never met and who seem really nice and share some common interest.” Blogger I said, “I do really enjoy connecting with people when they write in and comment. That’s why I started it, to share ideas and talk.” Blogger K said feedback from readers fuels her desire to improve: “I think every blogger wants recognition, wants comments, wants to know that it’s being appreciated and when you’re putting so much time into something, be appreciated. So that’s why I want to become better at every aspect of blogging and be one of those well-known bloggers that inspire others.”

Help others

Helping others was a gratification for 55 percent (6) of bloggers. Blogger D started her blog as a helpful way to share with her faith community (and other communities with strict dress codes) how to follow the modesty codes and still be stylish. Blogger E simply enjoyed writing a blog and through the process learned that her posts were helpful to others: "Writing about what I wear wasn't important to me at first – it was just something I did. But then I started getting really great (and sometimes not so great) feedback from readers who are Asian, hippy, short, etc. who were appreciative of the fact that I was out there showing them that clothing could work for them, even though they weren't typical model proportions (because I'm definitely not). Now I feel like it's my duty in a way to keep blogging just to keep showing these wonderful ladies that you don't have to be six feet tall and willow-thin to love what you wear." Blogger F said, "I like being able to help people and inspire them. I just had one of my friends tell me that she made a pasta sauce that I had written about and now it's her favorite thing to make. I think that's so cool. I learn a lot of new tricks from blogs, so I'm happy to pass them along to readers of my own blog."

Creative expression

Being able to express one's creativity and improve creativity was a use and gratification for 55 percent of bloggers. Blogger K said, "It's a creative outlet. I feel like I've always been told I'm a creative person, but every time I post I feel like I'm feeding that creative part of my personality." Blogger I defines her interest in Anthropologie, fashion and blogging as her hobby. "It's what I enjoy doing, it's my joy and interest in Anthro. I'm not getting compensated, blogging is for my own inspiration and fun and it's good to have another outlet



Figure 4 Anthromologies, March 28, 2012

beyond being a mom of four and living in a not-so-exciting city (San Antonio). It helps me feel connected to the fashion world in general and talk about it and feel up to date on it. And if my interest was in something else then I'd be up on all the stats for that," said Blogger I. Others found personal style blogging to be a good way to improve their own creativity. As Blogger C said, "I decided to start blogging to help encourage myself to start being more creative with my own closet. I thought if I had a place to put the pictures of myself wearing outfits it would make me try a little harder to look cute." Blogger H said, "I feel like (due to blogging) I am improving in my creativity with what I wear, with my writing and with how I can stretch my wardrobe."

Enjoy writing

Enjoying the writing aspect of blogging has been an unexpected bonus of being a blogger, as reported by 45 percent (5) of the bloggers. As Blogger I said, "I started it thinking I would just have fun, but I've discovered that I really like the writing part. I don't have to do it for a grade. That's been a surprise." Blogger J said writing and freedom of expression is her favorite aspect of being a blogger. "I like to write, and though I try to keep it to a minimum (because barely anyone reads it), I like being able to jot down whatever is on my mind at the moment. My blog is very personal; I want to keep it that way."

Create a personal space

Blogging can serve as a scrapbook of sorts, or a place to express one's self and 45 percent said this was an important use and gratification for them. Blogger G said she started her blog after seeing many other bloggers post their favorite outfits from the past year. She wished she had a way to see how her style had evolved, and decided that "starting a blog would be a good way for me to document that journey... I like documenting my life—my outfits, my travels, big events. I love going back and looking at my wedding posts for even just looking back and remembering a certain day or a certain meal."

Launching pad

Twenty-seven percent (3) see personal style blogging as a way to help them succeed professionally. Blogger J, the only one within the data set that owns her own handmade clothing and accessories line, said that she sees her blog as a way to promote her business. “I would ultimately like to use it as a launching pad for something bigger. Ideally, my clothing and accessory line would expand beyond my blog, and I would love to do more styling. Becoming a successful blogger who only blogs is not my intent. Being a successful businesswoman, however, is - and they may as well go hand in hand.” Blogger K, whose goal is to become a successful style blogger, said she’d like to work with brands because “there’s some sort of credibility that comes from working with brands. I’d like to get my name out there, become known as a name in fashion and I think that the most credible names in fashion get there because of the influence of the brands that they work with.” Blogger A, who used to have a blog but has since stopped writing because she didn’t enjoy the process, said “I want to inspire other people by my styling choices. I also hope that a blog will bring in business for me.”

Effect of Reading Blogs on Purchase Habits

The following questions were added after one blogger interview had already been completed, so only 10 of the 11 bloggers answered them. Nine bloggers, or 90 percent, agreed they’ve made purchases based on seeing an item on a blog, and Blogger J did not deny doing so, saying “Not as often as you’d think.” Most, however, readily agreed, as Blogger G said, “Reading blogs absolutely has an affect on what I purchase. This can be good and bad. There have been many times in the past when I have seen an item on another blogger – something I was never interested in to begin with – but once I see it styled really nicely or with another item I already have, it sparks an interest. Also, bloggers are very good about keeping each other informed of sales.” Blogger D said she frequently makes purchases based on what she views on blogs, explaining, “If they link up to where they found

an item, and it works for my wardrobe, it's a pretty easy decision to make. I buy something this way a couple times a month." Blogger C said, "I have definitely purchased more in the past three years than I ever have before, and I believe both reading blogs and writing my own blog has indeed influenced that. I would say reading blogs has caused more spending as opposed to writing my own blog. I have never purchased anything for the sole purpose of writing an interesting post."

Blogger B explained she's learned to moderate the impulse to buy, saying that reading blogs provides "more exposure to items and sales that I wouldn't have come across on my own. There's so much inspiration and you want to participate. When someone displays it in such a beautiful way and you forget that they have a different body type or features, and you bring it home and you realize it's not really for you." Blogger E shared how although she is tempted by things she sees other bloggers wearing, "the opposite has also happened before, where I would be really excited about a certain skirt or dress, but then a blogger will review it and reveal that maybe it's not well-made or too thin/too thick, etc., and I'll automatically decide I don't want it anymore."

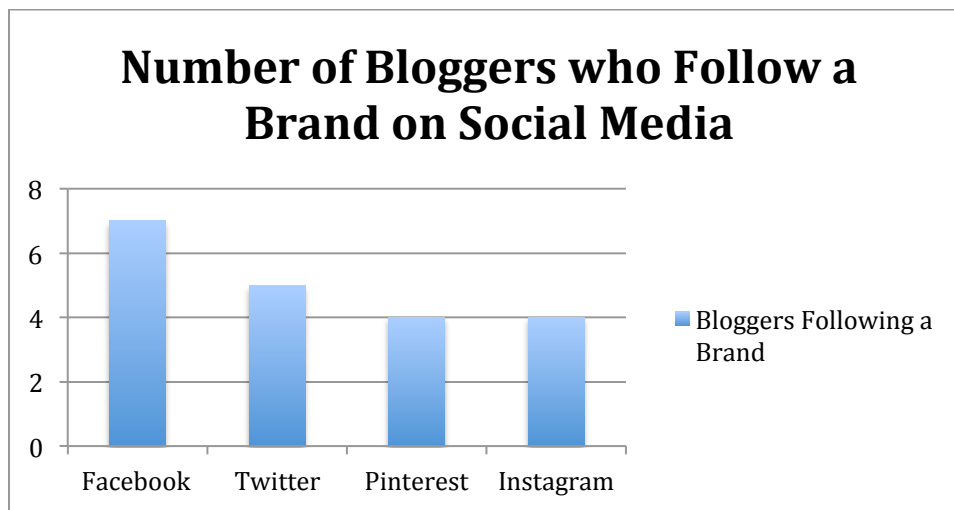
Effect of Writing Blogs on Purchase Habits

Seven of 10 bloggers reported varying degrees of pressure to "keep up" or buy more items to keep their blog interesting, or increased purchases due to activity performed for the blog, such as trying on items to review them for readers. As Blogger E said, "For sure! I've reviewed items that some readers have requested for me to review, and I'll sometimes end up really liking it, haha! Also, I'll sometimes pick something kind of crazy looking and outside of what I'd usually pick up just to review it for the blog and end up loving it."

Blogger J who has maintained her current blog since 2008 and is one of the more experienced bloggers interviewed, said "You initially feel like you have to keep up with your peers, but

eventually realize that your readers are interested in what *you* are wearing, not whether or not you have the same blouse as blogger x. I'm not a girl who can afford luxury designers, and that's okay."

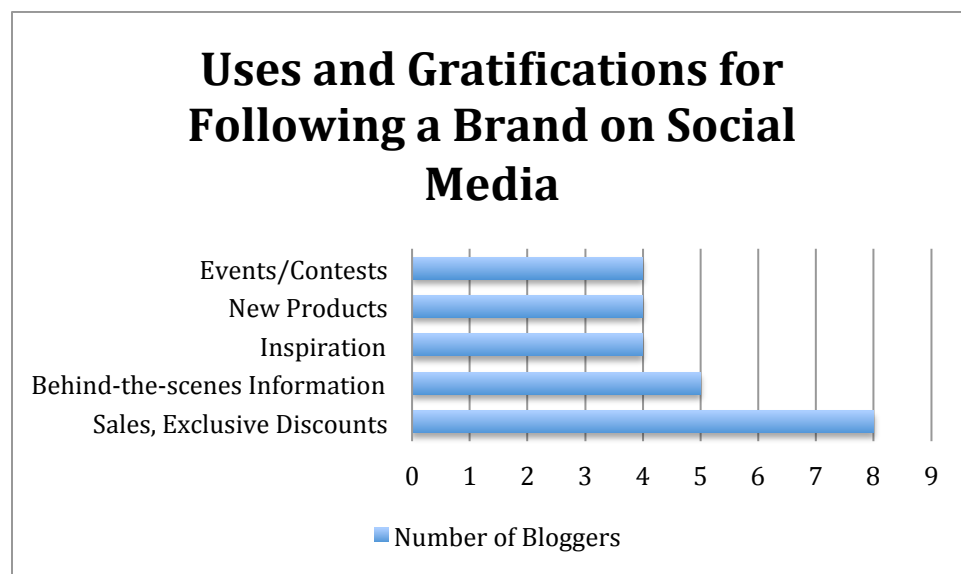
Following Brands on Social Media



Ten of the 11 bloggers were asked if they follow brands on social media, and if so, which platforms. The chart above indicates that seven bloggers follow a brand on Facebook, five via Twitter, four via Pinterest and four via Instagram. All four forms of social media, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, are available to anyone who wishes to create an account online. Facebook is an online social networking platform that allows users to create profiles and connect with friends and entities such as brands and celebrity personalities. Twitter is a micro-blogging platform where users create profiles and message feeds where they can post messages that are 140 characters or less. Pinterest is an online image clipping platform that allows users to "pin" or save images and videos they find online to topical "boards" or pages. They can also "like" and comment on pins posted by other users and "follow" other users' boards. Instagram is a digital photo sharing application that users can choose to add a "film development" treatment over a photo and saves all photos taken with Instagram to a user's profile. Others can view the images by visiting a user's profile and can even subscribe to it.

Some really enjoy following brands on social media, but they have definite opinions about which platforms are better for following brands. As Blogger H said, “I prefer to use Twitter or Instagram. I don’t really interface as much with brands on Facebook because for the most part I like to keep my Facebook personal.” This seemed to be a common sentiment, for although more bloggers followed brands on Facebook than the other social media platforms, they did not express enjoyment about it as much as they enjoyed the content from Pinterest and Instagram. Facebook was seen as a good place to hear about sales and new items, or events. Blogger J said she likes “Twitter, because it’s an immediate dialogue. I follow a lot of my favorite brands on there—and on Instagram.”

Uses and Gratifications for Following a Brand on Social Media



Sales/Exclusive discounts

Sales and exclusive discounts were the top reason to follow brands on social media, with 80 percent of the ten bloggers choosing it. As Blogger E, who uses Facebook and Twitter, said, “I follow brands on social media mainly for the surprise sales announcements. Otherwise, sometimes a brand will

highlight a certain product and I'll look at it, but nothing gets me more excited than a really good sale."

Behind-the-scene Information

Half of the bloggers listed behind-the-scenes info or glimpses as something they want and enjoy about brands' social media. Blogger K, who uses all four forms of social media, said, "Instagram I really love because there are some brands that are doing fantastic things, Free People for one, it's not just a new item, it's photos of their employees who embody the Free People style, and you feel like you're on a more personal level with them. Same with Lilly Pulitzer, and their posting fun events at their office."

Inspiration

Forty percent (4) follow brands on social media for inspiration. Blogger I said she enjoys following Anthropologie on Pinterest because, "I know that whatever I see will be inspiring. I wonder what they're pinning and why, who are these people and what do they do in the company, and wonder if they use it as inspiration for the clothing."

New Products

Although hearing about new products was mentioned by 40 percent of the bloggers as a reason to follow brands, none elaborated. Blogger G, who uses Facebook, said she likes that brands "sometimes post about sales or highlight new items. Otherwise, I don't pay much attention to their Facebook page."

Events/Contests

Event and contest information was mentioned by 40 percent of the bloggers. Blogger E said, "Event information is nice too, but as most events are not held in my city, those rarely appeal to me."

Contests were mentioned by Blogger D as a motivator to start following a brand, when brands run campaigns that say, “Like this brand for a chance to win.”

Branded Social Media’s Effect on Interest in Brand

Brands that let consumers into their world or post images that represent their ideal consumer’s interests inspire interest from their follower. As Blogger J said, “I find that if they have an authentic, on-brand voice, that helps a lot. Kate Spade, for instance, does a great job of letting you into that Kate Spade world. It’s all about bright colors, cupcakes, glitter, nightlife, idioms. Everything you would imagine a Kate Spade girl to be. To be honest, I rarely ever buy anything Kate Spade, but it makes me want to buy *everything*.” Blogger K agreed, saying, “Specifically Lilly Pulitzer and Kate Spade, I appreciate them so much more that they don’t solely push out their own products. It’s so cute when they post things about their co-workers’ cupcake birthdays, it makes them more real. More genuine, not just out there to sell their products.”

Branded Social Media’s Effect on Purchase Behavior

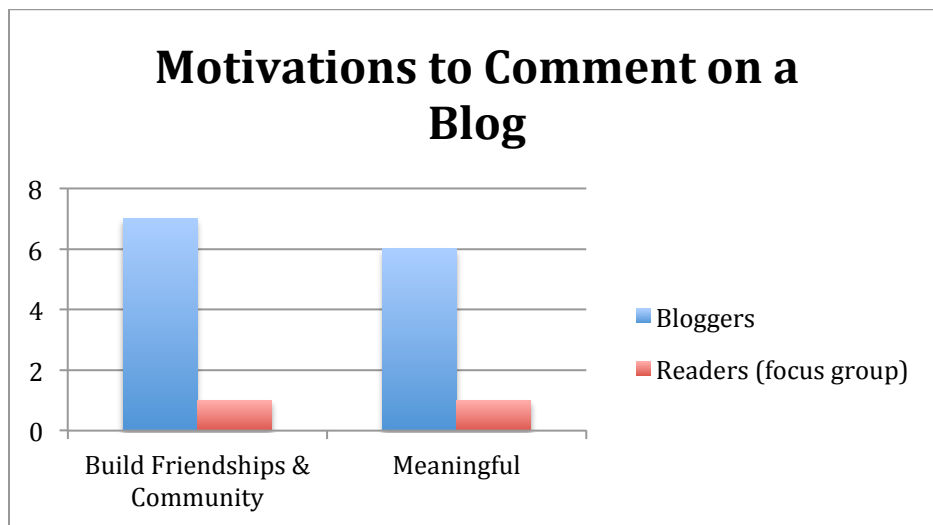
Following brands on social media affected purchase behavior for four of the ten blogger. Blogger J: “When they tweet about sales/samples sales, in particular. Especially when they live tweet limited discount codes!” Blogger K said, “I have definitely purchased more Kate Spade since following that brand on all aspects of social media. At the same time, I can’t afford full price and I’ve caught on to Friends & Family sales so [social media] has helped me as well.

Comparing Focus Group and Blogger Interview Responses

Focus Group and Blogger Interviews: Comments as a way to Build Community

Sharing a sense of community is something both focus group members and interviewed bloggers mentioned. Blog readers and writers’ efforts to participate in building the community was

addressed by measuring their frequency of commenting on blog posts. Although the blog readers in the focus group did not comment on blogs nearly as often as the bloggers comment on fellow blogger's posts, both parties still feel a sense of community with the blog authors. In the focus group, 75 percent (3) primarily "lurk" that is, read blog posts and do not comment, but still reported feeling a sense of closeness to the bloggers because they are learning about the bloggers' lives. The focus group member who does comment does so on blogs where she's met the authors.



This question was asked to the focus group members and to 10 of the bloggers. Seventy percent (7) of bloggers said they comment in an effort to build friendships with other bloggers and build community. Blogger G said, "to create a sense of community is a big one. I also know how long it takes to come up with a good blog post and I feel like I should tell other people that I'm reading and I appreciate the time they put into their outfit/photos/content/whatever." Blogger C said, "Most often, I comment on those people's blogs who I desire to create a friendship with. Other times I will comment on someone's blog who has commented on mine to return the favor." Sixty percent (6) mentioned that they try to only comment when they have something meaningful to say. As Blogger H said, "I really only comment if I feel like I have a connection or something to offer the author. I never post comments that are like 'cute top!'" Blogger K holds the same convictions, and said, "I'm

very into the idea of blogging providing a sense of community. I appreciate every comment, but you can tell who's put thought into their comments. I've found it's kind of an unspoken rule that some bloggers will just comment as a favor but not necessarily out of genuine interest. I've made a lot of friends thru blogging, and I don't comment on their blogs every day unless I'm inspired to do so."

Discussion

R1: What needs and gratifications are Anthropologie customers seeking when they choose to engage in brand-created social media? Most customers visited looking for sales information (information use), styling ideas and inspiration (entertainment gratification and information use) and information about new items (information use), behind the scenes information about the brand (entertainment and relational). Least important was the social need to connect via social media to others who like Anthropologie, perhaps because blogs and other avenues exist to fill this need.

R2: Are experiential benefits or functional benefits stronger motivators for Anthropologie customers to engage with Anthropologie's brand-created social media? In the case of Anthropologie, functional benefits such as sales information were a more common motivation to engage with the brand's social media. However, this may be because blogs meet experiential needs better.

R3: How does interaction with Anthropologie's brand-created social media influence purchasing behaviors? Use of social media is a motivator to visit Anthropologie's website and purchase at Anthropologie, but is less influential than blogs. Blog readers in the focus group said they preferred to hear from the brand via email. Bloggers said following brands on social media did prompt them to purchase more when they learn of sales through social media or receive exclusive discounts through social media.

R4: What uses and gratifications are some Anthropologie customers seeking when reading personal style blogs?

Personal style blog readers in the focus group identified style inspiration, information about items, entertainment, relaxation as their uses and gratifications for reading style blogs. The top four uses and gratifications for style bloggers reading other personal style blogs were to gain inspiration for own outfits (functional and experiential), relax/be entertained (experiential), meet others who share interest (experiential), and get exposure to new brands/items (functional). Also important to them was to find tips and how-to information (functional) and learn how to be a better blogger (functional).

R5: How does reading personal style blogs affect purchasing behaviors?

As seen unprompted in the social media survey, and in the focus group with blog readers and interviews with personal style bloggers, reading style blogs definitely has an effect on increasing purchases. The bloggers reported that reading blogs motivates them to purchase due to increased exposure to items, sale information and learning new ways to wear items.

R6: What uses and gratifications are some Anthropologie customers seeking when writing personal style blogs?

Bloggers are motivated to write a personal style blog by their enjoyment of interacting with others (experiential), to help others (experiential), as a creative outlet (experiential), because they enjoy writing (experiential), to help themselves improve their own creativity (functional), and the least common reason, as a launching pad for future endeavors (functional).

R7: How does writing personal style blogs affect purchasing behaviors?

Writing a personal style blog does influence bloggers to purchase more. The bloggers report being motivated by increased exposure to products, sales, and a desire to keep the blog interesting for their readers.

Hypothesis 1: Customers who are heavily engaged with a brand are more likely to consume the social media surrounding a brand.

Supported. Those who say they love Anthropologie are much more likely than any other category to use Anthropologie social media.

Hypothesis 2: Customers who engage heavily in consuming the social media surrounding a brand are more likely purchase products after being prompted by a social media post.

Supported, though not significantly. Purchase frequency did increase with higher levels of social media engagement. Social media survey respondents indicated that 42 percent of them purchase due to following brands on social media, and 40 percent of bloggers who use social media agreed that they purchase due to following brands on social media. The 40 percent range is line with Nielsen's 2011 State of Social Media findings. It is also possible that fewer responded affirmatively due to a self-belief that they are not influenced by marketing.

Hypothesis 3: Customers who read personal style blogs focusing on a brand are more likely to be frequent purchasers of that brand.

Supported. Increased exposure to items lead to increased interest and purchases.

Hypothesis 4: Writing personal style blogs increases clothing purchases

Supported. Seven of 10 bloggers reported purchasing more due to activity performed for their blogs.

Limitations

In the social media survey, personal style blogs emerged as an important influencer for store/website visit frequency and purchase behavior. This may partially be because most of the respondents took the survey as a result of it being posted on a blog, but also because blogs do a better job of building a community and forms stronger relationships between users than the Facebook and Twitter brand presence does. It would be interesting to see if people who do not read blogs rely on and enjoy brands' social media more than those who have blogs as an alternative.

Self-reported behavior regarding purchases influenced by social media may not be entirely accurate regarding purchase history or motivations due to unwillingness to ascribe one's behavior to external sources such as social media. It is possible that fewer responded affirmatively due to a self-belief that they are not influenced by marketing.

The researcher didn't have cooperation from Anthropologie to post the survey on Anthropologie's Facebook and Twitter in a visible way. This would have significantly improved response levels from visitors to those social media pages.

The interviews with bloggers gathered information from 11 bloggers, but as this is qualitative data, the findings can not necessarily be interpreted to be true of all personal style bloggers.

Future Research

Future research could explore specific uses and gratifications for more types of social media such as Pinterest and Instagram to further develop purchase motivations and behavior. Efforts to correlate uses and gratifications with specific social media platforms could be explored to identify additional positive and negative uses and needs that brand social media can fill. Research could attempt to

correlate uses and gratifications to brand engagement and purchase behavior, which would be helpful in identifying best practices for brands using these different social media platforms.

This research found that blogs have a stronger influence on purchasing behavior than brand social media. Further research into how brand partnerships and sponsorships with bloggers are perceived by blog readers may yield insights in how to best approach forming such relationships between brands and bloggers.

Conclusion

Both brand social media and blogs are influential in affecting the purchase decisions of its readers, although blogs are more powerful. It is likely that if a brand can harness the popularity of bloggers, the brand will seem more personable and relevant to its fans and fans of particular bloggers.

Anthropologie has been observed reaching out to bloggers by inviting them to exclusive events, such as the launch of their wedding brand BHLDN, when they invited several popular bloggers (examples here: <http://prettyshinysparkly.com/bhldn-launch-preview>; http://ohjoy.blogs.com/my_weblog/2011/02/bhldn.html) to the unveiling of the first location and offered them the opportunity to try on dresses and accessories, refreshments, and other perks. In return, the blogger participants reported about the new brand on items to their readers. Many of the bloggers included were wedding bloggers, but others are simply popular bloggers like Oh Joy! Other events held at local stores to launch special collections invite top customers and often include bloggers. These bloggers, again, publish a review of the event for their readers. (See example of holiday parties at Anthropologie attended and reported on by Roxy of Effortless Anthropologie: <http://effortlessanthropologie.blogspot.com/2010/11/eye-candy-nyc-holiday-fashion-show.html>).

Anthropologie did not respond to requests for participation in this paper. Therefore

Anthropologie's corporate policy towards engaging bloggers is unknown, but the author was able to

speak with an apparel supervisor at the St. Paul, Minn., location regarding its practices, and learned that any collaboration with bloggers has to be approved by the corporate office.

Following a brand on social media isn't seen as especially helpful or relevant to most study participants or focus group participants. Users often chose to follow it simply because they like the Anthropologie brand, but felt social media was typically only helpful in very functional ways such as learning about sales or new products. As we saw in the focus group, they want to see messages that are relevant to them such as local events and activities or contests they can participate in. This did vary depending on the type of social media. Facebook and Twitter were seen as more utilitarian information sources, while Pinterest and Instagram were more social, experiential information sources. The only group that reported true appreciation for the messages provided via social media was the bloggers.

Retail brands seeking to engage bloggers in promoting their products must walk a fine line between being seen as "buying" good reviews versus soliciting trials or exposure of their product. The best situation is when a blogger is already a fan of the brand, because then their endorsements will be seen as more authentic. Brands should also take into account the type of information blog readers are accessing blogs to find, and determine how they can participate in fulfilling those needs. Some examples could include styling challenges where a blogger is asked to create a set number of outfits with a featured clothing or accessory item, stage a photo shoot that embodies the brand archetype, or other interactive activities.

Similarly, retail brands would do well to develop their social media strategy by targeting uses and gratifications to the social media channel. Facebook and Twitter messages should be focused to provide this sort of useful, actionable information around sales, new products and other utilitarian

uses, while Instagram and Pinterest messages incorporate contests, behind-the-scenes sneak peaks, how-to tutorials, and other community-building messages.

Brand interaction with consumers via social media and blogs is likely to continue to grow over the coming years, and a successful brand will learn how to speak to and create a community with its fans by providing them with information they want to receive using the channels they wish to receive it in.

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Appendix

Social Media Survey

Do you “like” the Anthropologie Facebook page?

Yes No

How often do you read Anthropologie’s Facebook posts?

Less than monthly, monthly, weekly, 2-3 times a week, daily

How often do you make a comment or “like” the posts?

Less than monthly, monthly, weekly, 2-3 times a week, daily

Do you subscribe to Anthropologie’s Twitter feed?

Yes No

How often do you read Anthropologie’s tweets?

Less than monthly, monthly, weekly, 2-3 times a week, daily

Have you ever re-tweeted, re-posted or discussed any Anthropologie posts with friends?

Yes No

How often do you interact with Anthropologie or other Anthropologie followers on Twitter?

Less than monthly, monthly, weekly, 2-3 times a week, daily

How often do you purchase items from Anthropologie?

Every few months, monthly, weekly

Have you ever purchased an Anthropologie item after hearing or reading about it through Facebook or Twitter?

Yes No

Why do you choose to follow Anthropologie social media?

Check all that apply:

I don’t follow Anthro’s social media

To learn about sales

To see styling suggestions

To learn about new items

To connect with other people who like Anthropologie

Other:

How long have you been following Anthropologie social media?

Have you noticed any change in how often you visit Anthropologie stores or its website since beginning to follow Anthropologie social media?

If so, how?

Have you noticed any change in how much money you spend with Anthropologie since beginning to follow their social media?

If so, how?

How much do you enjoy the Anthropologie brand?

I'm not a huge fan, It's ok, Neutral, I do enjoy it but it's not my top favorite clothing store, I love Anthropologie!

Demographic questions

What is your age?

17 or younger, 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46 or older

What is your gender?

Female, male, prefer not to respond

[See corresponding Excel document for raw data]

Focus Group Raw Notes

Name, age, and how long you've been reading style blogs.

A: 30, 3 years

B: 30, 2 years, blogging for 1 year

C: 29, 4 yrs

D: 27, 2 yrs

About how many style blogs do you follow on a regular basis?

B: 30 blogs follow—read at work,

D: 6, but not super regular

C: 3

A: 2

How much time do you spend in an average week reading style blogs?

C: 2 hours

B: Check daily, 5, not during weekends

D: several hours a week, 2

A: 1 hour

How did you first discover style blogs?

C: shopping for specific product from Anthropologie, if I wanted to see what it looked like on a non-size 0 person, so I googled the product, and found one. Like ModCloth, they started naming products after bloggers, so found some bloggers via that.

D: Links from online magazines that referenced a blog, in American Apparel, then found from bloggers blog rolls.

B: Charming Charlie, looking for locations and saw list of blogs that had mentioned brand, so clicked through, and found more that way.

A: My sister introduced blogs. Exposure to fashion blogs has made me more interested in finding other blogs on other topics I'm interested in, such as home style, idea of using blogs as inspiration resources.

Why did you choose to follow certain style blogs over others?

B: more than just the clothes, like to see the personality, if she's someone I'd be friends with and has a style that appeals to me, as much as you like one brand, you still want to see more variety.

D: before they get "branded" before brands start partnering

B: I like bloggers who thrift shop

C: mixing high and low, Target and thrift store,

B: makes me look at my own shopping habits:

A: Keiko Lynn gets things at thrift stores and alters, and it's empowering to see how she changes things, and feel like I could do that too, though I haven't

C: I've meant to buy a sewing machine b/c of blogs like that

D: not too much writing, good quality photos and video

B: I don't have a camera either, but I want better than fuzzy iPhone photos

A: yeah, if it's hard to see, it's not helpful. I like outside

D: Not too nice photos b/c don't want it to look professional but not bathroom photos, I love when they have a nice setting

B: Hate it when people cut their heads off the photos.

A: photos bring out their personality, so want to see their faces

C: Well written, but not really into themselves and too pose-y. Not when people are clearly doing this b/c they want to be a model. Say something insightful.

A: don't like it when they use the same phrases constantly "I love me some polka-dots". Clothes and makeup and a focus on hats, variety is more fun, a Monday feature, that sort of thing.

B: Like local, MN bloggers b/c feel a connection, we know the same places. Two birds, MNchic.

D: I'd like to find MN bloggers, it's fun to get outside of MN. Has to be something authentic, genuine.

Blogs can be a great way to learn something. What sort of information do you want to find through personal style blogs? (sales, events, how-tos, styling ideas, hair and makeup ideas, info about store openings, brand info)

C: how to put outfits together, coordinate different pieces, things I wouldn't have thought of myself

B: remix wardrobe so I don't have to spend so much to keep up with trends. Before I started reading style blogs I had about 10 outfits I'd cycle through, now I have more ideas

A: nice to see how new trends are interpreted, I know with belts, I didn't know how to wear or which ones to choose

B: Styling ideas for neon, how to wear just without looking too 1996,

D: I tend to follow blogs that are hyper creative, crazy, things I'd never wear but are visually intriguing. I really enjoy those.

B: what I wore today—she's really fun and she does pattern mixing

D: I'm trying to identify what it is that I like, and how do I feel about it in real life vs. in blogs

A: For example, pattern mixing was intimidating but I was so proud the first time I tried it

C: I can use blogs as an art gallery, just want to look at it

D: I like to share with other friends, sending a friend a link to something she'd like.

Have you come to rely on blogs to tell you info—say about regular sales, or similar?

B: one blog seems to always know when Target has really good coupons, saves me time.

C: I read more for entertainment, though if I went to that one I might!

A: if you find a blogger that has a similar shape as you, then you can see how something will look on you. So without having to try it on, you know if it might be an option for you. Pre-try-on reviews.

C: that's a big reason I read them too.

A: of if they say something about the quality, then I know I can not bother.

Has reading blogs introduced you to new brands?

B: yes, ModCloth, Shabby Apple—won something

D: yes, usually local, small, Etsy. I like supporting individuals, get more products that are unique

A: it's made me rethink stores, like Forever 21, haven't actually repurchased, but more open to it. Went, didn't buy, but did like some things.

B: yeah, same thing with F21. Has purchased now.

C: agree, F21 is a good place to try a new trend instead of writing them off. It's not my favorite, but I'm totally open to buying stuff anywhere if I like the item.

B: rethought thrift stores, used to not want to waste time, but now I am open to spending the time,

D: H&M, cheap, low quality, but I love the mixing, so individually I can make it work.

Reading blogs can also be a form of entertainment. If this applies to you, how does reading style blogs fulfill an entertainment function for you?

D: Gets you through the day, fluff just need a break.

B: Definitely fulfills time, like reading a fashion mag, you just need that fix sometimes.

C: Go Fug Yourself, it's snarky fashion, I probably follow it the most

B: watching the things to "not do" can laugh at it, don'ts.

N, B: entertainment is primarily reason to read.

A: In a way, it feels like useful entertainment, not a complete waste of time because you're gathering ideas and it's fun. It's not like reading politics. Practical in a fun way so doesn't have to be depressing like news. I don't always feel like it's a waste of time.

G; not just entertainment,

A: infotainment

C: I do think of it like research b/c I'm big on doing research on anything I buy, and it's a way to look into the styles that you're thinking about buying

D: you get cuts and styles in your mind

C: And you get to hear about what they thought about it, and then you think of something you didn't, so that's nice to hear too.

Do you want bloggers to be relatable, to have a similar budget and like similar brands as you? Or do you like "aspirational/dreaming" style where it's all just pretty pictures?

N/B: relatable

D: both, blogs for more relatable

A: I like the ones that are relatable, but I still think their budgets are bigger than mine, but I still like the ones that shop at stores I can access. Read Vogue for aspirational images.

D: sometimes the designer things aren't appealing

Do you look forward to reading blogs?

B: yes

C: yeah, if I have a break coming up at work, it's a reward for finishing something.

D: yeah, if I have free time. It's what I'll do if it's raining or nighttime.

Blogs can serve a community-building function for people with a similar interest. How does reading blogs fulfill this for you? (friendship)

B: yes, I've had a chance to meet local people, and I've made friends with bloggers from across the country, they're nice people, we have things in common

D: It's a goal for me, in the future, when you start writing your own. Start by starting a twitter, and I haven't activated yet, if I make a blog then I want it to be really specific about what I want it to be, so construct things on twitter and link to things. How did you stated?

B: yeah, comment on each other's blogs, that definitely makes a difference. I started by taking photos of myself everyday, there's link up parties so everyone can do a theme, and they link to each other's and people find you that way. Try it and see if people respond.

C: I'm not very interactive, I'm more of a consumer.

A: do you feel like having a blog is having an archive of your life?

B: like an online scrapbook,

A: do you ever reference old posts

B: I have, but I learned a lot from reading other's blogs, I don't know how long I'll keep it up.

Bethietheboo.com on Blogger.

D: I get into these fantasies, like I need to go back to NY, but then I'm like I can be in the Midwest

B: There are some cool fashion events, cliché put on one in grain belt NE, models were inside the box, and you looked through little holes to see them. Like art. Not so wearable. Found out from Cliché 7/4 sale mailing list.

D: it's like musicians, I saw Brother Ali and I was so excited to talk to him, they're personal to me, and style bloggers are the same way.

C: many of my close girlfriends aren't really into fashion

B: same thing, I do go shopping with a couple friends but not that many.

A: terms style bloggers use are only used within the blogs

B: I have friends who read my blog, but just mine, they're not really interested in fashion.

A: in our family, too, Jess is considered the one whose good at it, but it's not super supported

D: gets a lot of negative
C: everyone has a hobby, this is my hobby
D: everyone spends their money differently,

Interacting with blogs can be a way for you to express your own interest and thoughts on a topic.
How often do you comment on blog posts?

C: don't

G, A: no really

B: I do on ones I've gotten to know, and made friends with. Some I read b/c they're interesting

A: Especially don't comment if others have already said same thing. I don't want to repeat.

B: sometimes bloggers ask a question b/c they're trying to engage readers, so then I will comment.

What inspires you to comment on a blog post?

B: a question. If I see a blogger that's new that doesn't have as many comments, then I'll send a compliment to them so they know someone is reading.

How often do you go shopping (even window shopping) in an average month?

Online counts

B: weekly, on a shopping website at least once a week, a mall 1-2 month,

D: online-5 times a week, but not always buying. Keeping track of things you like. Don't get to stores as much anymore. If I'm going to target, I try to just get out

C: stores in a mall are like vultures, and they keep asking for you to get their card

D: and your email and phone #, get better deals online

C: cuts down on impulse shopping. 3/week.

B: put something in cart, and leave, then think about it.

D: free shipping online is helpful, then you have to wait for it, it's fun.

A: 3

Do you think reading style blogs has influenced your purchase decisions before? In what ways?
Yes.

C: not directly, just figuring out what fits work on me

B: finding things that go with other things in my closet.

C: have trouble styling things with current items with skirts.

D: supplementing stuff, what do I need to add, haven't purchased immediately, where can I find it the cheapest, more conceptually aids my shopping rather than directly buying a featured item.

B: helps me know what's trendy right now, sometimes are more interested in trying a trend

A: I feel more comfortable buying new trend, I've gotten enough ideas and seen different ways to wear something

D: make up is big

A: now I finally learned how to apply eyeshadow, I decided to try using it more. Blogs helped me learn how saturated certain brands are, helped me figure out what brands are good.

D: have bought beauty products off a blog

A: helpful to know how people's skin reacts to products

C: that's interesting, never looked at blogs for makeup.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Do you follow certain brands on social media sites?

C: no

D: not really,

B: tried a few brands, and found it make me want to shop more because you're getting inundated with products

A: I really only “like” brands to enter contests
B: I’ve done that to enter contest but then later unlike

What social media sites do you use?
Facebook, twitter

Have you noticed anything useful to you about following a brand on social media?
B: only that I won a skirt once, otherwise I find it annoying, too many posts a day, I just don’t like seeing it so much, hard enough to keep up with real friends not brands
A: you want to consume brands when you want to consume them, not constantly.
D: FB is for my family, brands don’t fit into that, and brands are separate from my life.
C: I agree with that.
B: I don’t blame them for jumping on board,
D: but business is business
C: I’m sure someone must like it but not for me
A: yeah my company gets tons comments on their posts,
C: my company too, I don’t get. I guess it’s a personal thing.
J: don’t post more than once a day
D: make it meaningful. Fake super secret sales, so gimmicky, they make me not trust them even more.
C: if a brand only posted once a month
A: or once a week
D: local is more ok, but national is not. Events are better, I’m interested in that.
A: sometime that’s relatable, like Cliché got a new designer and this is what inspired it, then
D: don’t want an ad or fliers on my FB
A: has to feel like it impacts my life. My company does questions about sleep, tips
D: might feel manipulative, don’t want to tell me what their solution is. I’m traditional about FB, It’s my personal space. I don’t know how brands could integrate with that.
A: meaningful content, something you can apply to you. Not about them. Style—how can you incorporate this new color, post about an image of yourself using this trend, asking question about how you do something
D: yeah, if a lot of your friends participate in something then that might feel more ok to me.
A: I liked how Anthropologie invited local bloggers to be stylist at their stores, for an event, that’s fun.

Does following a brand on social media affect the way you view that brand at all—does it make it more relatable, for example, do you feel like you’ve made a statement about yourself by publically liking a brand, etc. How does that affect how you think about your relationship with that brand?
A: I feel like I ought to like them a lot if I’m liking them on FB.
B: the part about making a statement about yourself; don’t know if I want my friends to see that.
D: I think younger people are more open to that, now I just like what I like and I don’t want to have to affiliate
A: when you’re younger you try to figure out your identity,
C: I like to maintain an air of mystery, I don’t want everyone to know where I shop. I don’t think anyone cares where I shop.
A: I don’t want all my friends to wear the same thing
G/C: people who like lots of brands are just offering free advertising to that brand by liking them on Facebook.
B: when I do write a blog post, I do write where the stuff came from, but that’s a service but I think that’s the difference
J, G, and C: identifying where stuff comes from is the genre of blogs, so that’s normal and wanted.

D: FB it's becoming the place where friends are going to becoming the place where friends market to each other

A: timeline on FB is becoming a personal document for each of us.

C: so weird to think about.

N, G, B, and A: like them less. Don't like any over sharing, in individuals or companies. Don't like it when people post 20 times a day.

Has following a brand on social media influenced your purchase decisions before? In what way?

D: It might remind me of something, then I might check the website but it's more annoying

C: very rarely

B: I'm more likely to check website and purchase due to an email rather than social media. Can adjust what you receive—how often, what topics. Can't adjust as carefully on Facebook

A: Like email so much better.

C: all brands send too many emails, I get emails from 5 companies.

B: puts all brand emails in a folder so I can choose when I want to review them.

A: with email you can read the subject line, and decide if you're interested

B: right, with Facebook, you can only decide to see all or none of the posts, so why follow?

Did you follow style blogs or brand social media first?

C: Blogs first.

B: I sort of followed brands on social media first, but now that I know about style blogs, I like them better so I've chosen the level of "don't show me updates" or unliked brands on social media.

Blogs are better?

D: but blogs get bad if they're oversaturated with company partnerships or have too strong a focus on a brand.

A: doesn't like it when partner with brand

D: now you're not "me" anymore, not relatable. I know they're being influenced.

A: Even though they say all their opinions are their own, you don't believe them.

Blogger Interviews Raw Notes

Blogger A

Age: 30

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-35,000;
35,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000; x
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000

Years following personal style/fashion blogs: 2 years

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly?: I follow 47 total style blogs. I follow 12 regularly.

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs? I don't typically read the blog stories I mainly just look at the pictures and read the style notes. I love seeing how different people dress and use it to inspire me with my own style and work.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others? My favorite style blogs are picture posts of daily outfits. I follow blogs that inspire and challenge me to think outside the box. I like blogs with lots of bold colorful pictures of clothes vs writing and storytelling. I like clean, classy, sophisticated form with a bit of edge.

What attributes of a blog do you like? I like blogs with lots of pictures that show different ways to put outfits and accessories together. I like blogs that are clean and simple and don't have too much clutter. I'm drawn to bright bold colors.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you? Pictures are important to me because I'm a visual person. As a photo stylist I learn and become a better stylist by looking at pictures. Pictures show me techniques that I may have never thought of before. I get bored easily by endless writing and descriptions.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs? Style blogs inspire me to dress more creatively. They keep me up to date on the latest trends. They also help me refine my skills as a stylist.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you? I'm a creative person and it makes me feel good about myself to express these skills through the way I dress. I also want to be successful in my business and the more I learn and develop my skills as a stylist the more jobs I get hired as a freelancer.

Writing blogs

What is the name of your blog? I don't have a blog. I started to create one but got stuck on the writing aspect. I'm much more of a visual person than a writer. I also found that it was challenging to keep a blog regularly updated and decided that I don't have the need or time to put into a blog right now.

Why did you decide to start your own blog? As a way to express and market myself and business.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog? I got really stressed out when I tried to create a blog and didn't enjoy it at all so I put it on hold for now until I'm ready to go back to it.

What goals do you have for your blog? I want to inspire other people by my styling choices. I also hope that a blog will bring in business for me.

Why is that goal important to you? I really enjoy creating and telling stories with pictures and I feel I can do this through styling. It makes me happy and I feel good when others are inspired by my work. The fact that I can make money doing something I love is truly rewarding and gives me a sense of pride.

Blogger B

Age: 30

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000 x

Years following personal style/fashion blogs:
Satorialist 4-5 years

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly?
20

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

It's an interesting introduction to people who have similarities to me that I wouldn't have otherwise met. Thru blogging I've seen a lot of creativity and artistic, crafty, lifestyle choices. I was always interested in these topics, but never dug into them as much and got to explore all the possibilities, now it's nice to come across others with an interest that they enjoy developing. A way to brainstorm to about things you wouldn't have otherwise thought of, personal style or other lifestyle choices.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

Relate-ability is a big factor. How realistic or tangible, in terms of style and budget, and a style that I'm drawn to, and I want to be able to take creative inspiration from them, I can window shop from reading them, glamour and seeing pictures and I think I tend to frequent blogs of people who have real lives and who have other things going on in their lives.

What attributes of a blog do you like?

Relatability, creativity, honesty, being genuine, people who stay within a budget, not a free-for-all. Not a full-of-themselves attitude, people can seem too impressed with themselves.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

Because to keep things realistic. Something attainable, the idea isn't to replicate, but to recreate in our own way, take things to another level, inspires you in a small way, solidifies what you like and enjoy.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?

My objective is to, figuratively speaking, my interest is personal style, and seeing what others are posting keeps me engaged. It's pleasurable to indulge in aesthetics. I've always enjoyed TV or other things that focus on fashion, and blogs took it whole another level, they are more relatable, and reading them gives me perspective. The blogs I tune into focus not only on clothes but other aspects of life. Indulge the side of you that enjoys the aesthetics and personal style.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you?

Because it's important to nurture things that make you happy and that are enjoyable, and inspire you to go outside of your comfort zone and see things differently. Among my friends, I'm one of 2 that look at blogs, and it's great that technology makes more things accessible and explore in a way that you're not accustomed to in your daily life, utilizing technology to allow you to gain another perspective. Forming a community with others who share interest in personal style.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?

Used to in beginning, now over time become much less active, but my lifestyle changed, I was a grad student and now I've been working really long hours.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include, to interact, to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc.

I feel like I should comment sometimes just to be nice, sometimes it's what they wore or wrote about that speaks to me, resonates to me and I want to share my thoughts or experience, other times I feel closer to certain bloggers so I may be more inclined to write something on their posts.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog?

I don't remember. I think realistically that I knew I had more clothes that I need and shopped more frequently than I needed to, so I thought that if I created this space, I would keep myself in line. I could inspire myself with myself. If I make it public others would keep me in line. I came across a couple blogs, and really really enjoyed the Satorialist, came across Anthrohollic and Roxy's, and looking at those and they gave me inspiration to create something like that for myself. Supposed to help me out and keep me in line. And I have one really good friend and she'll keep me in line by sending me a text if I've bought something new. But's it's actually been fun, my mom and dad will look at it and my in-laws got access to the link and that was embarrassing. It's ok for people you've never met who share a common interest to read it, but there are others that you know irl that I don't want to share that aspect of me.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog?

I enjoy that it gives me the opportunity to sit down and think out about how to write. Good exercise to articulate what you were thinking, reflecting. Again I enjoy that I'm technically documenting what I wear. When I have time I try to come up something substantial to say.

Why is that important to you?

Definitely there have been a few times when I've questioned why I keep blogging, asking myself what contribution am I really making for myself or for readers? I enjoy blogging, but the reason that I keep coming back is I enjoy coming away from my everyday norm, and interacting with people that I've never met and who seem really nice and share some common interest. But I think just as easily I could pack up and go and find another way to indulge this.

What goals do you have for your blog?

To keep enjoying it so it doesn't feel like a chore. Actually really do try to address the initial goal, which is to curtail my shopping.

Why is that goal important to you?

Because I think as time goes on there's less time to do things I really enjoy doing and an investment to keep doing things I really enjoy doing. Maybe superficial and silly, but it's something that I enjoy and I can keep doing it and it's fine.

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item?

For sure, sometimes. It used to be worse, meaning that there was greater influence. I think at the beginning I was young and I wanted to keep up and ensure that on my blog there was something interesting to see and more exposure to items and sales that I wouldn't have come across on my own, so now not only do I have exposure to what others are finding. So it can be dangerous and took me awhile to understand what I was getting out of blogs, and there's so much inspiration and you want to participate, but it definitely still happens and sometimes now I click on an item and then I stop myself. When someone displays it in such a beautiful way and you forget that they have a different body type or features, and you bring it home and you realize it's not really for you.

As a blogger, you may review items or in general keep track of sales as a service to your readers. Do you believe this has influenced you to purchase items you wouldn't have otherwise researched, or been interested in?

Sure. Yeah, absolutely I think it's inevitable. Especially for situations when stores are online only, you can't try it on so you're more likely to try it yourself, a group mentality and everyone likes it and I should do it too. I think that happened especially with Anthrolic and I don't know how exactly but there was definitely a move to imitate her style and buy the things she bought. Popular bloggers. After her blog closed, there was calm, less of a rush to go after her items. I noticed her transition over time, her identity though the blog changed, and how much people are defined by their blog.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer?

Not twitter. On FB, and I like Anthro brands, and Anthro and Loft. Know how to access but don't follow religiously. See it on the news feed but very seldomly click through. Mainly b/c Anthro never has discounts via FB, and the brands are good with email so they offer me more through email.

What do you like about following a brand on social media?

I don't have an opinion because I don't really follow. They send me emails, and I can access through blogs. Blogs might make me visit their site more.

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?)

Useful_ when you're looking for something like looking for a sale,. No when you're trying to stay away. Sometimes too much access is not the best. The Chloe Conspiracy has all the sales, and then all of a sudden, I have no interest in going to those stores, but oh, I could get facial moisturizer and etc ,so earlier this year I unsubscribed to reduce temptation.

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how?

Not really.

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand?

I don't think so.

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not?
No, probably not. I don't like too many things on FB b/c then I'll just have more things to scroll.

Blogger C

Age: 31

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000-XX

Years following personal style/fashion blogs: 3 years

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly?

About 25 regularly

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

I like seeing what deals other bloggers are finding on clothes/shoes/jewelry/accessories, and I like to see how bloggers style their outfits. Style blogs are a great resource for styling ideas.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

I usually follow other bloggers who like the same brands as I do, who have similar body types as mine (thinking that if something looks cute on them it may on me), and I also choose some over others because the basic content of the blog is more interesting and appealing (layout look can be important as well...the cuter and cleaner it looks, the more likely I am to keep reading).

What attributes of a blog do you like?

The number of times a week a blogger posts, the brands of clothing talked about on the blog and the way the blogger styles their clothing.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

I like blogs with multiple posts a week because it keeps my interest (always wondering what will be posted next and makes you look forward to the next post), I won't follow a blogger if they are dressing in brands that I usually don't shop, and I like being able to get ideas of how to style my clothing from those who dress similarly to myself.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?

To try to score good deals on items, to score items in general (learn about items on blogs), to improve my use of my own closet by getting ideas from others on color combinations and styling.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you?

One of my favorite things to do is shop (alone, online, with friends, etc). I like adding pretty things to my closet and being able to style these things in a way that is fun and different every day.

Reading style blogs helps me achieve these goals.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?

I used to comment more, but now not as much. Maybe a few times a week I take a 30 minute period of time to comment.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include, to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc.

Most often, I comment on those people's blogs who I desire to create a friendship with. Other times I will comment on someone's blog who has commented on mine to return the favor.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog?

I decided to start blogging to help encourage myself to start being more creative with my own closet. I thought if I had a place to put the pictures of myself wearing outfits it would make me try a little harder to look cute.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog?

I like the online friendships I have created. I like the chance to ask questions and share information about brands, outfits, etc. And any blogger will tell you, it is always nice to receive nice comments from others. It's an added bonus, not a goal.

Why is that important to you?

I feel like blogging has given me a little bit of a voice on something I am passionate about. I like having my own little corner of the Internet to try to inspire others to get creative in their closets.

What goals do you have for your blog?

To help others be more creative with their closets, to inform about clothing (through reviews), to share ideas, to ask questions.

Why is that goal important to you?

I'm a stay at home mom. Writing my blog gives me a way to communicate with other women who are in my same predicament about something we're all passionate from while being able to stay home in my pj's if I want. It's nice to feel like I have people wanting to hear from me.

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item?

A TON! It's a game of want, want, want. You see something cute, and you want it!

As a blogger, you may review items or in general keep track of sales as a service to your readers. Do you believe this has influenced you to purchase items you wouldn't have otherwise researched, or been interested in?

I have definitely purchased more in the past three years than I ever have before, and I believe both reading blogs and writing my own blog has indeed influenced that. I would say reading blogs has caused more spending as opposed to writing my own blog. I have never purchased anything for the sole purpose of writing an interesting post.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer?
Facebook, Blogs, Emails

What do you like about following a brand on social media?

Easily accessible, able to find out about sales quicker

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?)

All of the above! It's so helpful in helping you stay on top of what's going on with a brand.

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how?

I would say it has increased my desire to follow a brand when I see mentions of it more often. The more I see, the more I want to buy!

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand?

Absolutely. In every way.

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not?

Yes, if the initial add was intriguing enough and if I thought they might have something good to offer that resembles the items from other brands I already purchase.

Ending:

Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share?

Overall I think social media has caused me to purchase more than ever before. For good or for bad.
=)

Blogger D

Age: 29

Approximate Household Income Range
Under 25,000;

25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000; x
Over 100,000

Years following personal style/fashion blogs:
2 years

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly?
60, 20

Started following high-end blogs but they weren't relatable, so started following some more personable ones with less high budgets.

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

Find inspiration and good deals from blogs that provide links, especially when blogs tell you where they found the items. Before I started reading blogs I had more black and white clothes, and style blogs helped me work more color into my closet.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

Gravitate to someone who has similar style. I tend to follow blogs that are more polished. I'm in a skirt and heels everyday so I'm less interested in blogs that are casual.

What attributes of a blog do you like?

I really like blogs that have great photography, I'm working on that, mine's more point and click, I like the ones with outdoorsy pictures rather than in the same building. I love when blogs give beauty tips and how-tos for hair and makeup, women like those kind of tips because there are some women who look so great and so it can be hard to approach other women, so it's great that they are willing to share. More relatable. Share sales or saving tips.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

I think the sales are important b/c everyone is looking for a good deal, beauty tips are awesome because it's often intimidating to women to approach other women, putting it out on the internet makes it easier to figure things out.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?

Go back to photography skills, there are a couple that tell what kind of camera and lens techniques they used.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you?

I think it would draw more readers and look more put together. I do want it to look professional and put together and higher quality photos point in that directions. Look more refined.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?

Probably 60-70%. I'm more drawn to blogs that are humorous that don't take themselves too seriously. It's also easier to comment when a blogger is reachable that isn't a blogger diva, which is a person who doesn't respond to readers. And seems unreachable.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include, to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc.

Yes, the above.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog?

I started because I'd wear certain outfits and get compliments from girlfriends who suggested I should start the blog, and it's a very intimidating thing to start taking photos and posting them. I thought it would be a helpful thing to share what kinds of deals I got, and we have a lot of dress code in our community and wanted to show you can follow the codes and not be frumpy.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog?

I enjoy knowing that I'll reach out to certain people, which is illustrated by comments I receive, I love reading comments saying they were inspired by my outfits.

Why is that important to you?

You don't have to be frumpy to dress modest, you can still wear trendy things and make that trend work for you.

What goals do you have for your blog?

I think just keeping up with it. I think I just like to see it out, see it still going in 10 years. I definitely want to make sure I'm posting things that are appealing to my readers and stay true to myself, keeping light and funny is a way to do that. I contemplated whether or not to put out my faith out there, but I wanted to let readers be able to ask about it if they have questions. Provide inspiration to others.

Why is that goal important to you?

I guess I was trying to decide my place, so to speak. I had a lot of girlfriends who were excellent crafters or cooks, but that wasn't my niche, and [styling clothes] is something that I'm good at. It's my thing.

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item?

Pretty heavily. If they link up to where they found an item, and it works for my wardrobe, it's a pretty easy decision to make. I buy something this way a couple times a month.

As a blogger, you may review items or in general keep track of sales as a service to your readers. Do you believe this has influenced you to purchase items you wouldn't have otherwise researched, or been interested in?

Sometimes, maybe a couple times a month, especially. I work full time and that's not possible for me, I follow Anthro, JCrew, Loft, Ann Taylor.

Definitely, I had to start deleting sale emails because it is tempting, so that I could take a step back and say there really is nothing that I need.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer?

Facebook, Pinterest, have Twitter but doesn't use. I started FB a few years ago and that's how I keep up with friends.

What do you like about following a brand on social media?

I do like catching up with sales and a lot of them allow readers and bloggers to post pictures on their pages. That's how I started following fashion blogs. (J's everyday fashion)

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?)

Sales, and contests (like this brand this for a chance to win), I usually email retailers directly if I want to speak with them.

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how?

There's already interest, not affected by social media. Sometimes constant posting gets annoying so I've actually unliked a brand because I get tired of it showing up in my feed.

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand?

Slightly up.

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not?

No. if there's no interest already I wouldn't start up interest to follow.

Ending:

Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share?

It can be a creative outlet and be a positive thing. People say negative things, but it has been a fun avenue to create new friendships, while I haven't met them in person, I've definitely established friendships via email and social media with them. This provides motivation to keep going.

Blogger E

Age: 25

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000; x
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000

Years following personal style/fashion blogs:

4-5... I don't remember when I started.

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly?

Regularly, I follow 2: The Chloe Conspiracy and Respect the Shoes. But that just means that I check them multiple times a week. I check out a lot more randomly, though.

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

I like style blogs because they're real clothes worn by real people – or at least, the ones I follow are. It's amazing seeing how everyone has a different style and take on clothes, and I especially love how much fun some people have with what they wear, even if it's just a random Wednesday work outfit. It's also a good way to get inspiration for my own outfits. A lot of the bloggers I follow don't actually

have the same style as me, but I think that's a good thing. This means that they come up with color, pattern, and silhouette combinations that are completely fresh (to me), and which I can then take and experiment with through my own clothing and tastes.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

I find that I gravitate towards bloggers who have a sense of humor because you can just sense the joy and fun they have with their ensembles. It also makes reading their posts very enjoyable because who doesn't love to laugh?

What attributes of a blog do you like?

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?

I don't know that I really have an objective, other than wanting to see something pretty (the outfits) and read something entertaining (the words). Sometimes I will get something more out of a post than just that (like getting an idea for an outfit of my own), but most of the time, I read them just to read!

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you?

Honestly? Because work gets kind of tedious, so I like reading blogs to take a mental break.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?

I try to comment as often as I can because I know that I personally love reading feedback and interacting with my visitors, so I assume other bloggers enjoy it too. That being said, though, I typically only comment on blog posts where the blogger writes something that inspires conversation. Otherwise, if it's just 4 photos of an outfit, I don't tend to leave a comment because there's only so many ways I can say, "I love those patterns!" or "You look great!" But I also haven't been commenting regularly because I've been busy, which is a bummer.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include: to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc.

Like I mentioned earlier, I tend to comment on posts where the blogger wrote something that inspires conversation, like if they shared a personal story or asked a question.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog?

I maintained a personal journal-style blog all through high school, but then stopped when I went to college. I missed having that outlet to just write and post about anything and everything, so I started up a new blog during my senior year. At the time, my favorite way to de-stress was to shop! (Luckily, I was also studying and working, so I didn't have excessive opportunities to spend my money, haha...) This meant that a lot of my posts were about clothes, and I found that as I kept posting, some readers found me and through them, I found other style blogs. This opened up a whole new world for me, and eventually, I ditched that old blog and started up kelinda.KELINDA, which focuses primarily on "outfit of the day"-type posts.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog?

Of course, my favorite thing to write about on my blog is clothing, though I also enjoy occasionally mentioning the places I go to around my town... You know, just in case someone has to come down to Houston for a trip! At least then they'll have some idea about what there is to do here!

Why is that important to you?

Writing about what I wear wasn't important to me at first – it was just something I did. But then I started getting really great (and sometimes not so great) feedback from readers who are Asian, hippy, short, etc. who were appreciative of the fact that I was out there showing them that clothing could work for them, even though they weren't typical model proportions (because I'm definitely not). Now I feel like it's my duty in a way to keep blogging just to keep showing these wonderful ladies that you don't have to be 6 feet tall and willow-thin to love what you wear – though I have nothing against 6-foot-tall, willow-thin women, either!

What goals do you have for your blog?

I used to want more and more readers, but now I just want to keep the blog going in general. As long as one other person reads it and enjoys it, that makes me happy. But aside from that, my goal is for the blog to be updated more regularly and to invest in a better camera in the future, haha!

Why is that goal important to you?

Updating regularly just makes it easier for readers to trust that you're still around and didn't just up and abandon them. And a better camera means I'll probably make more of an effort to actually snap photos each morning!

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item?

I admit that if a blogger looks really great in a certain item, I'm going to want to try it for myself really, really badly. This doesn't always work out in my favor because all people are shaped differently. Good thing for store returns! But the opposite has also happened before, where I would be really excited about a certain skirt or dress, but then a blogger will review it and reveal that maybe it's not well-made or too thin/too thick, etc., and I'll automatically decide I don't want it anymore.

As a blogger, you may review items or in general keep track of sales as a service to your readers. Do you believe this has influenced you to purchase items you wouldn't have otherwise researched, or been interested in?

For sure! I've reviewed items that some readers have requested for me to review, and I'll sometimes end up really liking it, haha! Also, I'll sometimes pick something kind of crazy looking and outside of what I'd usually pick up just to review it for the blog and end up loving it. That very thing happened with a certain skirt from Anthropologie years ago! It was mustard yellow with a peplum, and I never thought I'd like it, but I decided to try it on anyway for the blog. Sure enough, I fell in love with it and bought it.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer? (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest. Doesn't include blogs or corporate email)

I follow a few brands on social media, like J.Crew, Anthropologie, and Urban Outfitters. I prefer Facebook and Twitter for these, but more so Facebook because they can post photos there too.

What do you like about following a brand on social media?

I follow brands on social media mainly for the surprise sales announcements. Kate Spade is especially good at this! Otherwise, sometimes a brand will highlight a certain product and I'll look at it, but nothing gets me more excited than a really good sale...

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?)

Sales! I don't really care for styling ideas because I prefer fashion blogs for those (I tend to not take professional model shots all too seriously because I know the product has been pinned, ironed, color-corrected, etc. to high heaven). Event information is nice too, but as most events are not held in my city, those rarely appeal to me.

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how?

No, I don't think so. I like emails more from brands than social media. Like I said, I usually just follow these brands on social media for sales announcements. I do think it's nice, though, whenever a brand interacts with its customers through social media by answering questions, replying to posts about that brand, etc. I haven't done this myself, but it does make me smile whenever I see someone I know get their query answered on Twitter!

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand?

I don't think my shopping habits are affected much by social media, so I don't think so.

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not?

As I don't really follow brands through social media anyway for any reason other than sales announcements, I don't think I would follow a brand through something I'm not too familiar with (like Pinterest).

Ending:

Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share?

I think the best shopping experiences come when shoppers feel like a brand cares about them. This can be seen in things like responding to customer concerns through social media, working with bloggers that support the brands, and even getting good customer service in the stores. I think if a customer feels wanted, respected, and appreciated, they'll want to spend money with that brand.

Blogger F

Age: 26

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000; x
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000

Years following personal style/fashion blogs:

4/5 years

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly?

10-12

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

I really enjoy seeing a glimpse into other people's lives. I specifically like reading style blogs to see how people put together outfits. It's great inspiration for my own wardrobe and also just fun to see people's interpretation of fashion/style.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

I personally enjoy blogs that aren't just pictures, but have some sort of commentary with them. While I like seeing photos of outfits, I also want to know a bit about the people I'm reading about. Did they pick up their skirt at a thrift store? Have they been drooling over those sandals for months? What makes them tick and put together an outfit in a particular way? For me it has to be a good balance of wordy content and pictures. The blogs I read also have to be somewhat similar to my own style. I know there are a lot of blogs out there that are the "Top 10 style blogs to follow" but I hardly follow any of them because I find their content and style isn't relevant to my life. Not that their content isn't good, it just doesn't resonate with my personal style.

What attributes of a blog do you like?

I like blogs that have a good balance of information and photos. I also like when bloggers throw in other things besides pure fashion. Do they like cooking? Entertaining? Underwater basket weaving? I think it's fun to see into other parts of their lives. No one's life is purely style or fashion. Some days you just want to sit around in your pajamas all day. I like when bloggers acknowledge that.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

With how fast blogging has grown, it's easy to compare yourselves to other and get the "I'm not cool/fashionable/rich/etc. enough" train of thought. I think it's important to see that bloggers are presenting the very best of themselves. No one is that put together at all times. I appreciate when they call it out and show that they're actual people too. It makes them real, and that makes me more interested in reading about their lives.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?

My blog is pretty small in both readership and popularity. I like reading blogs to see what I can do better. I love hearing about how blogs became popular or what they did to grow their little piece of the internet. Seeing photos or how -to's also inspires me to try my own.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you?

I really enjoy blogging, and while it's hard with a full time job and having a "real" life, I would love to grow my blog into something that reaches more people.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?

It depends on the blog. Commenting is actually one of my goals to work on. A lot of time I feel like everything I could say has been said by other commenters. Do they really need one more "that's so cool!" comment? That's probably a silly way to look at it, and of course people want more comments, even if it's just a reiteration of what the last 15 people said. So I'm trying to work on commenting more and getting over my fear of looking stupid. It's all in my head anyway. I love when people write comments on my posts, so it makes sense other bloggers like when I comment back!

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include, to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc.

I usually comment on posts that either really inspire me or resonate with me in some way. If it's a recipe that I tried and was amazing, I'll go back and say so. If it's a great idea of how to wear a scarf,

I'll say something. Lots of times it's just pretty pictures and I want to show my appreciation for them sharing something beautiful.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog?

I've been writing some form of a blog since 2004 when I started a Live Journal about my sewing adventures in college. I started a fashion blog in 2008 when I moved out to LA to go to fashion school and discovered the 'Cupcakes and Cashmere' blog around the same time. I loved writing about LA and fashion school, and when I moved back to the Midwest for a job, I decided to start a new blog, focusing purely on my interests – fashion, food, literature, and anything else that I decided I wanted to write about.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog?

I love having a place to put things that I like. My favorite recipes are all on my blog, any clothes or style inspiration that I love is there, and all sorts of random pretty things that I want to keep track of and enjoy. I also love when my blog helps other people. My Anthropologie duvet tutorial post has led others to email me asking questions about how they can make one, and I love being able to help people create things!

Why is that important to you?

Like I said above, I like being able to help people and inspire them. I just had one of my friends tell me that she made a pasta sauce that I had written about and now it's her favorite thing to make. I think that's so cool. I learn a lot of new tricks from blogs, so I'm happy to pass them along to readers of my own blog.

What goals do you have for your blog?

I would love to be able to post every day and grow my blog so it has a bigger presence. One of my ultimate goals would be to have some sort of collaboration with a company – not because of money or because people think that's when you've made it, but more because I think it would be SO COOL!!

Why is that goal important to you?

My main goal right now is to just be able to post everyday. It takes a lot of time and energy, but the best blogs post once or more than once a day. You need to keep giving readers new content. It's difficult with a full time job and various commitments (and nearly impossible while having all those things and planning a wedding!) but other people somehow do it, so I'd like to be able to as well.

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item?

Looking and buying for me are two very separate things. Most of what fashion bloggers wear I can't afford. I like blogs like Kendi Everyday, who wears clothes from Target and Forever 21. That's more on my level of spending. Have I gone out and bought an item because I saw it on a blog and thought it was adorable? You bet. But a lot of times bloggers' bodies are built different than mine and it doesn't matter how many times I try on a pair of mint green jeans, they just will not look good on me. It really comes down to being inspired by style bloggers – maybe you like the way they wore a belt – but staying true to your own style and what you know fits your body.

As a blogger, you may review items or in general keep track of sales as a service to your readers. Do you believe this has influenced you to purchase items you wouldn't have otherwise researched, or been interested in?

Honestly, I'm not that big yet so I haven't had companies sending me anything to review. If that does ever happen, I'd be picky about what items I would review on my blog and only speak to items that I would have otherwise bought.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer?

I'm on Facebook, twitter, instagram, and pinterest. I stink at all of them, except maybe pinterest. That's another one of my goals – using social media to better my blog.

What do you like about following a brand on social media?

Mostly I like pinterest for all the inspiration and pretty pictures that brands post. I follow people on twitter, but I really only like finding out about sales.

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?)

I do like hearing about sales and events through social media.

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how?

Not entirely, however I do follow some stores on twitter and Facebook and it's nice to hear the voices of the people behind the brand. It makes a brand seem more personal.

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand?

No. For me a brand has to have the right product for me to buy. I'm not incredibly brand loyal, so for me the best product wins, no matter who it's from.

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not?

Probably not. I prefer to follow brands that I know and love. Perhaps if it was new or had a compelling reason for me to follow them.

Blogger G

Age: 30

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000; ****
Over 100,000

Years following personal style/fashion blogs: 3+

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly? Approximately 40

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs? **I like getting to know other bloggers, seeing how certain clothing pieces look on other 'real' people, and I like being inspired to try new things (new brands, new pieces, new styles, new colors, new combinations).**

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others? **Some blogs I follow just because I have made some connection with the author, others I follow because I am inspired by their style. One of those 2 things has to be true for me to continue following.**

What attributes of a blog do you like? **I like good photography and creative thinking – I like to see a clothing combination that I may not think of myself. Most of all, I like to get a real sense of the blog author. So, I want real life, not a sugar coated view.**

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you? **I want to be inspired – either by beautiful photos and/or clothing, new ideas, or by someone being honest and sharing part of themselves.**

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs? **I keep coming back to this, but a lot of the time my goal is to gain inspiration. If I go through a few days or weeks feeling like "I don't have anything to wear", everything is blah, etc. I like being able to go through my blog list and suddenly think, "ah, I could wear this top with this skirt" or whatever.**

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you? **I feel better all around when I am dressed well. I like dressing up, I like colors/textures, I like interesting clothing. Reading blogs and connecting to other bloggers encourages/promotes/helps that part of my life. It's a creative outlet.**

How often do you comment on the blog posts? **As time permits, but fairly often.**

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include: to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc. **All of those things you mentioned – to create a sense of community is a big one. I also know how long it takes to come up with a good blog post and I feel like I should tell other people that I'm reading and I appreciate the time they put into their outfit/photos/content/whatever.**

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog? **During December 2010, as I was going through my blog list I kept seeing end-of-year posts where bloggers reviewed their top 10 outfits, or their top 10 posts, etc. It made me wish that I had some way to look back on my year and see how far I had come. I decided then to start my blog. I was just getting interested in clothing/fashion/style and I thought that starting a blog would be a good way for me to document that journey. I also wanted to connect with other bloggers and be a bigger part of the community.**

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog? **Being able to connect with others has been the best thing about it. I also think that being able to look back at old posts has been a great help to me as far as taking my style to the next level (I like being able to look back and say, I love that dress, but it really didn't look good with those shoes. Maybe I will try it with a different pair of shoes and this cardigan, etc.). I like documenting my life - my outfits, my**

travels, big events. I love going back and looking at my wedding posts or even just looking back remembering a certain day or a certain meal.

What goals do you have for your blog? **I don't really have any goals for my blog. I just want to keep posting as long as it feels right to me. I don't want it to feel like a job or like I have to post.**

Why is that goal important to you? **I like documenting my life - my outfits, my travels, big events. I love going back and looking at my wedding posts or even just looking back remembering a certain day or a certain meal.**

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item? **Reading blogs absolutely has an effect on what I purchase. This can be good and bad. There have been many times in the past when I have seen an item on another blogger – something I was never interested in to begin with – but once I see it styled really nicely or with another item I already have, it sparks an interest. Also, bloggers are very good about keeping each other informed of sales☺ Yes, it definitely adds an extra layer of temptation. I think this can also go the other way too. Seeing a blogger “shop their closet” and come up with great outfits can also be inspiring.**

As a blogger, you may review items or in general keep track of sales as a service to your readers. Do you believe this has influenced you to purchase items you wouldn't have otherwise researched, or been interested in? **No. I don't typically do general reviews. If I purchase something, I will sometimes share it on the blog or give a quick review of it, but I don't go into a store thinking that I'm going to try on 20 things so that I can review them on the blog.**

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer? (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest. Doesn't include blogs or corporate email) **I follow a few different brands on Facebook. That's about it. I'm not active on Twitter and while I do love pinterst, I have only followed people there (although I did just get an email a couple of weeks ago saying that Anthropologie is now on Pinterest☺)**

What do you like about following a brand on social media? **They will sometimes post about sales or highlight new items. Otherwise, I don't pay much attention to their FB posts.**

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?) **Yep! That is the main reason I follow; sales, new products, and styling ideas.**

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how? **Not really, I was already obsessed with the stores I follow before I started following.**

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand? **No.**

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not? **I don't think so. I can't think of a reason why I would.**

Blogger H

Age: 26

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000 x

Years following personal style/fashion blogs: 3

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly? I have over 100 on my Bloglovin' and Google Reader but realistically I only follow 10 with regularity.

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

I like that everyone can have a different perspective and that you really learn so much about someone's personal style based on what they are putting out in the blogosphere (I hate that word but it's apropos). It makes me feel more confident in my own style to read blogs where there is no right or wrong way of having style- it just is what it is!

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

I like great photography and blogs where I can relate to the author's aesthetic. At the end of the day, I want to feel inspired by reading blogs and so I read the ones that do the most.

What attributes of a blog do you like?

clean layout, great photography, bright colors, a candid and humorous writing style, inspiring subject matter and at the end of the day, does it hook me in some way so that I come back tomorrow?

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

I think that's what makes a blog inspiring to me. I want to read blogs that are applicable and relevant to my life where I feel like I could be friends with the author and really understand where he/she is coming from.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs? I think my biggest goal is does it inspire me to do something different with my own blog, with my closet, with my home, etc. I want to feel that urge to try something new by reading a blog. That's my end goal when I'm a reader.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you? If I am choosing to spend my free time reading blogs, I want to feel like that time is partially productive :) It's only productive for me if I am using that time to then ideate, get excited and take on a project that I wouldn't have otherwise. It's the same reason that I like Pinterest.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?
Not often- maybe one post out of 25.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include: to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc. I really only comment if I feel like I have a connection or something to offer the author. I never post comments that are like "cute top!". It would be more realistic if I commented on a post where the author is looking for travel advice in a city that I have lived or been to frequently.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog? I was really bored at my job and not fulfilled at all. Every day I didn't feel like I was accomplishing much. I started a blog as a venue for me to channel that energy and feel a sense of accomplishment in a given day- like I got something done and produced this one thing.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog? Meeting goals and the sense of accomplishment and pride when I am pleased with the work or a specific post. I feel like I am improving in my creativity with what I wear, with my writing and with how I can stretch my wardrobe.

Why is that important to you? It makes me feel like I am actually doing something worthwhile and that I am improving. If I'm not proud of my blog, then I am probably not getting better at it.

What goals do you have for your blog? Not many really, I try to be more consistent with the amount of content I produce (i.e. 5 posts a week, etc) but I usually end up falling short :) Other than that, my biggest goal is to enjoy it and feel excited to continue doing it. I'm not one to set numeric/specific goals for my blog because at this point in time I look at it as an enjoyable hobby. I love to further develop my style and push the envelope even more. I would love for my writing and photography to continually be getting better. I like to make friends through my blog but I wouldn't call it a goal per se.

Why is that goal important to you? It's why I started my blog in the first place and makes me feel like I am doing something worthwhile!

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item? A little- it may be that I had never heard of a brand/item/product/store and that a blog helps me become acquainted with it. In the end, I still feel like I am going to make a decision for myself on whether I need an item enough to purchase it :)

Do you think that being a style blogger has influenced your purchase habits in any way? Such as, do you feel more pressure to "keep up" more with trends or in any way spend more to keep things interesting for your readers? I do! I sometimes find myself thinking that I need to buy more interesting items that would photograph well or that I could wear in a certain way to keep my blog interesting. This is a dangerous habit because there is no ending to the blog like there is an ending to buying an outfit for a wedding or special occasion.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer?

(Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest. Doesn't include blogs or corporate email) I prefer to use twitter or instagram. I don't really interface as much with brands on Facebook because for the most part I like to keep my Facebook personal and not blog related.

What do you like about following a brand on social media? That I can see new products!

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?) Yes but I don't use that information in an actionable way- ie I very rarely will actually make a purchased based on that information.

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how? Not that I can think of at this point in time.

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand? Not that I can think of at this time.

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not? Not that I can think of at this time.

Blogger I

Age: 36

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000: X

Years following personal style/fashion blogs: 4 years

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly? Check in 4-5 times a month, 40 blogs.

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

I like, in general, when people have something they are very passionate about, they follow through. So I enjoy reading other fashion blogs because it's something we have in common, especially Anthro blogs. Sometimes I get annoyed with other fashion blogs when girls seem all the same with the bun and nerd glasses. A way to unwind, and a hobby for me. I read fashion blogs.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

I think because I love Anthropologie I prefer blogs that focus on Anthro, the blogger likes and wears Anthro. Wit, knowing that what I'm wearing isn't just it. I like creativity and humor, I also follow wedding blogs since I love doing décor for events since I love doing décor in my own life, so blogs right now I like fashion and something else, I'm more likely to visit, esp. if it's Anthro.

What attributes of a blog do you like?

I like specifically when people feature DIY things, especially harkening unto Anthro style, color inspiration stuff (ombre, etc), I also like themed posts, things I would be interested in, how to wear something. I think I started doing that more in my blog b/c I didn't see it much in blogs I followed. I also have a lot of friends locally who will ask me do something specific on the blog, like style an item, or how to do something, or from requests from other blog readers. Wanted direction, more meat to posts, so that's the direction I've decided to go with it. More that a picture of a pretty outfit, or be funny. I don't like reading blogs that talk about budgets all the time. They want to be accountable, they can do that offline.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

Directly played out in real life, applicable to my life b/c I know I can create or interpret it my way. Tweak it a little bit so that it's mine. Fashion—helps people who don't know how to do that, oh I can put that with that, inspiring to me and fun.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?

Personally, as a blogger, having my own blog, I have other bloggers that I follow, we kind of have a relationship with each other that we can comment on each other's blogs to support each other, and be inspired at the same time, be up-to-date, with Anthro news, like Roxy's blog, for sale information, Support of others, info about things, also info as in, like fit reviews of Anthro items, also seeing something that's like Anthro but isn't Anthro—something that I would wear but wouldn't know about. Sharing sale code.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you?

I think it's because it's a hobby. Back to that primary interest, it's what I enjoy doing, it's my joy and interest in Anthro. I'm not getting compensated, blogging for my own inspiration and fun and it's good to have another outlet beyond being a mom of four and living in a not-so-exciting city (San Antonio). It helps me feel connected to the fashion world in general and talk about it and feel up to date on it. And if my interest was in something else then I'd be up on all the stats for that.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?

Once a week, take one blog, catch up on all the newer posts, and comment on maybe 2-3 posts. I comment on 5 blogs a day probably, I can't do it on the go b/c I don't have an iPhone.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include, to interact to create a sense of community, because you want to.

Usually, because I have a relationship with them, we've all been blogging for awhile, or like something exciting they are posting about (life event, trip) or wearing an awesome outfit that I think is really inspiring, then I'll comment on that.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog?

It had a lot to do with Anthrolic was still live, she did the readers submissions, in 2009, and I would submit one every other week or so and it was really fun for me to put myself out there, and I had started to comment more on other Anthro blogs and there were a lot of people who were really supportive asking when I'd start my own blog. I didn't think I had time or knew how, but after 6 months, I knew I liked reading blogs that had to do with Anthro, and I felt like I had something to say that I wasn't seeing on the other blogs. I thought, if I had a blog I'd do more DIYs than fit reviews, and I got inspired by other blogs that were out there. When we discovered that there were other Anthro blogs out there, and didn't have friends who shared the same interests, so blogs let us connect. After becoming a mom, I still want to be cute, I don't want to dress in leisure clothes all

day. I wanted to start blogging for as a way to express that interest. I did say in the beginning, my family comes first, and blogging is just a fun hobby, and that's worked out pretty well for me. It would be different if I were making money from blogging, but I don't want to worry about making it be a business. It would start to take over your life then.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog?

I started it thinking I would just have fun, but I've discovered that I really like the writing part. I don't have to do it for a grade. That's been a surprise. I do really enjoy connecting with people when they write in and comment. That's why I started it, to share ideas and talk. But it seems like there are less people commenting in general. I know that when I check my stats, I know over 300,000 people are reading my blog this week, but less comments, I think busy people are commenting less often, my personal friends don't comment often, don't have time, feel silly or stupid or like a stalker. I had reservations at first too, but after a while I felt like I was stealing from them if I didn't comment, I wanted to share that they were inspiring me. I think [not commenting] is about time for a lot of people or knowledge of how. Don't want to register for IntenseDebate, etc. I think a lot of friends in my age bracket don't know how. Writing my blog is like a hobby, an escape for mundane. It's my little bit of walking into an Anthro,

Why is that important to you?

Creative part of me, always have something that I'm making or creating for me or friends, this is my side project all the time, it keeps me inspired, and flexible or limber, constantly inspired to want to do more instead of feeling like I'm out of ideas. Vanity aspect, I definitely want to look good in clothes, look good for me, so dressing in Anthro that I'm really happy or proud of, just having that thing for Anthro, knowing that others who also love Anthro can participate, I wish my close friends here would share this interest, but a lot wouldn't because it's not their thing so I seek that out from readers.

What goals do you have for your blog?

When I hit the year mark, I asked readers what they wanted to see more of and liked the most. A lot said they loved the DIY stuff, styling posts, queen of your closet. My goal in general is to do one of those posts every 2 weeks, not strict about when. Often don't have a particular plan for a post, some things do, but like to be flexible, don't have to stick to a schedule. Keep doing posts that I enjoy until I feel stale. I know there will be changes coming, don't have a goal in how long I'll blog. Whet that creative whistle, have that creative outlet.

Why is that goal important to you?

I'm so right-brained. I like to play, create thing, I hate schedules, this is my playtime.

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item?

I've thought about this, and looked at my closet, and I thought out more items because I saw it in the catalog that I chose rather than because I saw it on a blogger. I don't always think something I like looks right on another blogger, I'll still try it on because I think my body type will work differently. Especially with the blogs that give their body stats, I can tell it might work. I might like things that are different than other women too. Depends on the item. Also a lot of people buy things because it's on sale, I try to wait for sale, but don't always, but I also am very specific about my choices. I'm finding that I have plenty in my closet for a creative feast, so I'm getting very picky about buying new things.

I'm 5'9.5", so I'm taller, I'm athletic build, size 6, so I think I've been swayed 10% of my purchases have been influenced by bloggers.

I have sold on eBay for many years, having blog sales is another option to recoup costs for items that I tire of and has been well cared for, coming from one Anthro fan to another.

As a blogger, you may review items or in general keep track of sales as a service to your readers. Do you believe this has influenced you to purchase items you wouldn't have otherwise researched, or been interested in?

Don't really do reviews of items, I do walk into Anthro after seeing the site (visit daily) and look for it in person, and walk away saying oh, not as great in person, or know it will go on sale because of fit issues for most of the customer base. That's a bonus of being on in the community for a long time.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? Don't do Facebook. Pinterest.

If so, what social media platforms do you prefer?

Pinterest

What do you like about following a brand on social media?

Know that whatever I see will be inspiring. Wonder what their pinning and why, who are these people and what do they do in the company, and wonder if they use it as inspiration for the clothing, concepting from concept to delivery. I know whatever they are involved with will be inspiring.

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?)

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how?

It hasn't caused me to like them more, it just solidified for me that they are free thinkers and creative people.

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand?

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not?
No.

Ending:

Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share?

I get a lot of emails from girls who say they buy something because they saw I styled it. I get comments like that usually 2-3 a week. So I know it's alive and well, and I'm sure it will happen to me too. Blogging does affect purchase.

Blogger J

Age: 27

Approximate Household Income Range
Under 25,000;

25,001-50,000;
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000 X - but that's with two people and NYC rent, so we're not exactly living the high life;)

Years following personal style/fashion blogs: nine

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly? five

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs? I like finding out about new designers, brands, or stores through my peers; I tend to stay within my usual circle and rarely explore beyond my favorite haunts, so it opens me up to new discoveries. I also love seeing how different bloggers will wear the same piece. A mass-produced top from Zara or H&M might be worn in a myriad of ways, depending on who is styling it.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others? I mostly follow my friends; as much as I love reading blogs, it can consume you. I work around the clock, so I can't sit at my computer and read every blog I love, or I will sit there for hours. I usually try to catch up once or twice a month and see what everyone has been up to/wearing. But my friends, of course, take priority. Although usually, I have already seen their outfits and/or took the pictures!

What attributes of a blog do you like? Attainability. It breaks down that barrier between the fashion world and the masses. Most of us are relatable, not perfect in any way, and have both hits and misses. We're not fashion magazines, we're not journalists, we're not even style experts (at least, I'm not). We're enthusiasts, hyper-consumers.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you? As blogging becomes more of a saturated market, the ladies are starting to look more and more like fashion models, but it wasn't always that way. I'm nowhere near sample size, and I have many physical and character flaws. I tend to gravitate toward the more relatable gals who lay it all out there for the world to see, who aren't afraid to embrace and even celebrate their quirks. I like feeling like I could be friends with them. Aspirational blogs are beautiful to look at, but can sometimes make me a little too self-aware. I imagine it might be like that for other readers. It just depends on your preference.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs? Pure entertainment or aesthetic stimulation. I like coming away from reading a blog and feeling light - or inspired.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you? It's a break from the daily grind. It's like reading a magazine, only you might think, "I can wear/afford that!"

How often do you comment on the blog posts? Almost never. I'm a lurker.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include: to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc. Thought provoking posts might drive me to comment, but I'm more likely to tweet the author than comment on their blog.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog? I had a personal blog for years, and it evolved into a style-centric blog, so I started over and focused on that. I started documenting my outfits to make sure I would get dressed on a daily basis, because I was wearing pajamas all day, every day. Working at home can get you into a rut.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog? Freedom of expression. I like to write, and though I try to keep it to a minimum (because barely anyone reads it), I like being able to jot down whatever is on my mind at the moment. My blog is very personal; I want to keep it that way.

Why is that important to you? Because I started out as a personal blogger. It was a diary of sorts, and even though the content has changed a bit, it still borders oversharing. That's just what I'm used to.

What goals do you have for your blog? I would ultimately like to use it as a launching pad for something bigger. Though I would love to have a blog forever - since I've had one for so long - I know there is an expiration date. Ideally, my clothing and accessory line would expand beyond my blog, and I would love to do more styling.

Why is that goal important to you? Because becoming a successful blogger who only blogs is not my intent. Being a successful business woman, however, is - and they may as well go hand in hand.

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item? Not as much as you'd think - but I do find myself clicking on their links and browsing other items, because of their post. And then I end up browsing forever! I'm more into buying vintage than anything, which is good because if I bought everything I liked on another blogger, I would be broke.

Do you think that being a style blogger has influenced your purchase habits in any way? Such as, do you feel more pressure to "keep up" more with trends or in any way spend more to keep things interesting for your readers? At one point, it did. Eventually, I got over that. You initially feel like you have to keep up with your peers, but eventually realize that your readers are interested in what *you* are wearing, not whether or not you have the same blouse as blogger x. I'm not a girl who can afford luxury designers, and that's okay. I'm more of a vintage/mid-tier/boutique/high street kind of mix. If you want to see luxury, there are some amazing bloggers out there who are dripping in it. If you want to see someone who probably has a few rips in her dress and has been wearing the same motorcycle jacket for years, I'm the girl for you.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer? (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest. Doesn't include blogs or corporate email)
Twitter, because it's an immediate dialogue. I follow a lot of my favorite brands on there - and on instagram.

What do you like about following a brand on social media? Exclusive discounts, news about upcoming events, peeks behind the scenes.

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?) See above

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how? Absolutely. I find that if they have an authentic, on-brand voice, that helps a lot. Kate Spade, for instance, does a great job of letting you into that Kate Spade world. It's all about bright colors, cupcakes, glitter, night life, idioms. Everything you would imagine a Kate Spade girl to be. To be honest, I rarely ever buy anything Kate Spade, but it makes me want to buy *everything*. That's great marketing.

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand? Yes. When they tweet about sales/samples sales, in particular. Especially when they live tweet limited discount codes!

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not? Yes, if it seems like something that might appeal to me.

Blogger K

Age: 23

Approximate Household Income Range

Under 25,000;
25,001-50,000; x
50,001-75,000;
75,001-100,000;
Over 100,000

Years following personal style/fashion blogs:
3 years

About how many style blogs do you follow regularly?

100. In Google Reader, some I read more in depth than others. When started blogging (April 2011) started reading 100, prior had not read as many. Best advice is to follow others, so that's why.

Following blogs

What do you like about reading style blogs?

Inspired in a lot of ways, putting together own outfits, beauty tips, all the same things I grew up reading fashion magazines for, relaxing, inspiration, teaches me a lot about blogging and how to becoming a better blogger and helps me in y own writing and photography. I read for enjoyment and to learn.

Why do you choose to follow certain blogs over others?

I think for me, one of the biggest things is photography. Stunning photography makes a blog, it doesn't have to do with how expensive the clothes are or even the outfits, I love fashion photography. And the layout, there are some in my Google Reader that I open out of the reader to enjoy the layout. I considered going into layout and design in college, so I really enjoy those element.

What attributes of a blog do you like?

Photography, blog design, layout. There's actually very few that I read b/c of the writing. There are definitely a couple that are written better than others, a v. humorous tone, but with style blogs writing is not one of the important things. Layout: really clean, something that reflects the clothing

style of the blogger, a theme that is all encompassing, and I always pay attention to the ones that have custom buttons that match the rest of their layout. Consistency and cleanliness.

Why is that/those attribute(s) important to you?

Blogs are enjoyable to me because of the visual aspect, if I'm going to spend an hour daily going thru my reader, I want to enjoy what I'm seeing. Same as I'd rather pick up a magazine than read it online. Beauty, fashion.

Thinking more about what you like about the blogs you follow, what sort of goals or objectives might you be trying to accomplish or fulfill by reading these particular blogs?

Become a better blogger myself. I'm always trying to learn tips on fashion photography, I can learn from the way they interact with their readers, I'm always trying to become better myself. Prob. My favorite ones, and a lot of popular bloggers, are the ones that have turned this into a career, and have become fashion consultants and have glamorous jobs, and that's not necessarily what I aspire to become, maybe someday, but I want to see what they did to become that way.

Pure enjoyment, and escape during the day, when I was in college and couldn't afford to subscribe to fashion magazines, blogs were a great way to get that enjoyment out of fashion, and I wanted to be stylish and learn how to put together cute outfits like they did.

I've learned what the trends are in any given season, I've learned a lot about fashion, the industry, social media which is ever changing, and how bloggers are using social media to promote themselves and form relationships with brands.

Why is that/are those goal(s) important to you?

I can say all I want that I do it for myself and it's a creative outlet for myself. But I think every blogger wants recognition, wants comments, wants to know that it's being appreciated and when you're putting some much time into something, be appreciated. So that's why I want to become better at every aspect of blogging and be one of those well-known bloggers that inspire others.

How often do you comment on the blog posts?

Every day, every time I go through my reader. Weekdays. Take the weekends off.

If you do comment on posts, what motivates you to do so? Examples might include: to interact to create a sense of community, to build friendships, etc.

I'm very into the idea of blogging providing a sense of community, and that's one thing huge bloggers forget after they get huge, but it's about supporting each other, being genuine, I appreciate every comment, but you can tell who's put thought into their comments. I've found it's kind of an unspoken rule that some bloggers will just comment as a favor but not necessarily out of genuine interest. I've made a lot of friends thru blogging, and I don't comment on their blogs every day unless I'm inspired to do so.

A lot of my close friends do read blogs and will tell me about them. I'm fortunate to have a lot of friends who appreciate the world of blogging.

Writing blogs

Why did you decide to start your own blog?

Because when I started at my job, where I do social media and digital initiatives for a small publishing house, and one of my biggest goals there is to write for and maintain our company blog. Uses Wordpress. So I started my fashion blog as a way to learn Wordpress. I can't remember if I thought it would last. My early posts were practicing, and I didn't tell anyone about it for a long time, and I got readers early because Wordpress promotes new blogs, but it was awhile before I started promoting. But I started with it, and it became therapeutic. I love my job but it's not quite as creative as I would like, and this is a way I can get that daily dose of creativity.

What do you enjoy most about writing your own blog?

I guess I just love seeing it all come together, from the second you start planning that outfit or feature, taking those photos, laying them out on the post, and I always try to search for similar products to older items I'm wearing. I love hitting publish, and seeing it all come together. Feeling of accomplishment. It's about every part, and I have fun along the whole way. And of course, feeling the love after it's live.

Why is that important to you?

It's a creative outlet. I feel like I've always been told I'm a creative person, but every time I post I feel like I'm feeding that creative part of my personality.

What goals do you have for your blog?

It's not where I want it to be, but I'm not sure where that is yet. I'd like to get better at photography, and get better at photo editing. Also layout, I've learned a lot about HTML, and I've made the layout with a pre-made one. I'd love to learn about web design and I'd love to work with brands. I also have a full time job so I can't dedicate my entire day to that, so I don't do a lot of reaching out to brands on my own so I want to get better at working with brands. I've done a few giveaways, I'm working heavily with a little boutique in Boston, and it's cross-promotion. I've gone to a few events and done reviews. I don't want to be the kind of blog that does sponsored posts everyday, working from an editorial calendar, etc, but a few more would be nice.

Why is that goal important to you?

Layout, photo, etc; I want to be proud of every detail of the blog. I'm a perfectionist, and I feel like I have a lot to learn. There's some sort of credibility that comes from working with brands. I'd like to get my name out there, become known as a name in fashion and I think that the most credible names in fashion get there because of the influence of the brands that they work with. Not sure I want to work in fashion—NYC and LA might not want to work there—I went to school for publishing, and while the publishing house I work for now doesn't have anything to do with fashion, I like it and maybe eventually would like to work for a publisher that works with fashion, but not something I strive for.

Purchase behaviors

Thinking again about blogs you read, how much influence does what you see other bloggers wearing have over your own decisions to purchase an item?

Definitely has a lot of influence. I would never, and have never remade an outfit completely, but I see a lot of items featured on blogs that have made my way into my closet. It's an expensive hobby, and I find myself writing about items and then purchasing it later. I definitely look for and will purchase it after seeing it on other bloggers. Then again, it helps because I might see items I already have and I'll see new ways to wear it.

Do you think that being a style blogger has influenced your purchase habits in any way? Such as, do you feel more pressure to "keep up" more with trends or in any way spend more to keep things interesting for your readers?

Keeping up with trends—no. I've seen a lot of trends I don't like, such as color blocking, I've dabbled in but don't love. But other trends like pastel and neon, I participate in because I like them but I've never felt pressure to follow a trend. And I feel very strongly about that. I don't want to be the kind of blogger who says this is in and this is out. Pointing it out is one thing but being bossy about trends. My two fav icons are Audrey Hepburn and Catherine Middleton. Classic. I'm not one to feel trends are necessary.

Social Media

Do you follow any brands via social media? If so, what social media platforms do you prefer?

(Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest. Doesn't include blogs or corporate email)

Yes. I follow a lot actually, FB, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram.

What do you like about following a brand on social media?

It's depends on the platform. FB and Twitter: new items, pup up sales. Instragram I really love because there are some brands that are doing fantastic things, Free People for one, it's not just a new item, it's their employees who embody the Free People style, and you feel like you're on a more personal level with them. Same with Lilly Pulitzer, and their posting fun events at their office. Kate Spade. It gives a glimpse into the lifestyle. And it's made me love their brands even more. It's funny that such a little photo app can do so much.

Pinterest: I appreciate what a lot of brands are doing, they're catering to bloggers by pinning one of their items bloggers are wearing, which are great for me. I don't use it to look at new products, not to look at their catalog, but don't wonder about them. Kate Spade's pretty good at that b/c they pin a lot of things that aren't Kate Spade but things that the woman who wears KS would appreciate.

Have you noticed any useful aspects to following a brand via social media that are particularly appealing to you? (Such as hearing about sales, new products, styling ideas, direct contact to brand reps, event info, etc?)

Definitely: hearing about sales, I get a lot of emails too, so I get the same info from emails, but I've caught a lot of friends and family sales through social media.

Has following a brand on social media affected your interest in that brand, or your relationship with that brand? If so, how?

Yeah; specifically Lilly P and Kate Spade, I appreciate them so much more that they don't solely push out their own products. It's so cute when they post things about their co-workers cupcake birthdays, it makes them more real. More genuine, not just out there to sell their products.

Has following a brand on social media affected how much or how often you purchase from that brand?

Yeah, I have definitely purchased more Kate Spade since following that brand on all aspects of social media. At the same time, I can't afford full price and I've caught on to Friends & Family sales so [social media] has helped me as well.

Would you ever follow a brand via social media that you were unfamiliar with? Why or why not?

I wouldn't follow them blindly (if they followed me, for example) but I'd follow due to giveaways because I did like some their products. Must be some sort of interest, but ones I'm not totally familiar with. And I'm not afraid to unfollow if I find I'm not really interested.

Anthropologie Store Managers/Employees Interview

St Paul, Minn. Anthropologie

Name: Craig

Position: Apparel Supervisor

Age: 30

Education level: N/A

Marital status: Single

Number of children: No kids

Household income range: N/A

Do you personally follow Anthropologie on Facebook or Twitter?

Yes

Why?

I'm an apparel supervisor so I follow Anthropologie to see what other stores do, but don't personally interact on social media, don't "like" or anything.

Do you interact with customers on Anthropologie's social media?

No. But we do submit images of our store to be featured on Anthropologie's Facebook. Corporate chooses the photos. We [store] submit photos of our store to corporate to sort through and choose what is displayed on social media. Submit about 1,000 photos a week. They are also used on internal site for employees only to see.

What policies does Anthropologie have for its employees using social media to interact with customers?

Use with discretion but not too formalized. Can lose job if used inappropriately.

Do you follow any other brands on social media?

Not really.

Do you read personal style blogs?

No.

Do you read any Anthropologie-focused personal style blogs?

No.

Have you reached out to blog writers to participate in an event at your store?

No.

Have you offered to partner with a blog writer in any way?

No, we'd have to go thru corporate to get authorization. Rena, store manager, would handle that.